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Russian dissidents, human rights leaders assail law against religion

Lawrence A. Uzzell

MOSCOW (Keston) — "This is ... a law directed against religions," asserted dissenting Duma deputy Valeri Borshchov at a July 9 press conference. He was describing the recent Russian parliament's bill which redefines religious groups' relation to the state. "It is an allusion to say that it is directed against destructive sects," Borshchov added.

Another Russian human rights activist, Anatoli Krasikov, said the bill was "written by atheists for atheists."

The Sakharov Centre, site of the press conference, distributed an open letter to President Yeltsin calling the controversy over the bill "a turning point for the development of the democratic process in Russia."

The July 7 letter was signed by Borshchov and five other human-rights activists, including the recently hospitalized Duma deputy Sergei Kovalyov, who led Russian opponents of the Kremlin's war on Chechnya.

Should concern Orthodox

Borshchov said the bill contains provisions which ought to concern Orthodox believers as much as Protestants or Catholics. The Orthodox Church traditionally practises both baptism and confirmation for infants, but the new legislation would prohibit religious associations from "attracting" minors without their parents' agreement.

CC FILES

The Grand Kremlin Palace, meeting place of the Duma, the Russian parliament.

In practice, said Borshchov, "this would mean that an Orthodox priest could not baptise a baby without the written consent of both parents." But "there was no such law even in Soviet times." He could not understand why the Orthodox Patriarchate

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Spiritual leaders address B.C. premier

JEFF HOOGENDOORN

B.C. premier Glen Clark confers with religious leaders. At right is Bishop Marlin Aadland of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada.

Jeff Hoogendoorn

VICTORIA, B.C. — Amid television lights and camera flashes, the honorable Glen Clark, Premier of British Columbia, entered his caucus room to listen to religious leaders' concerns about issues in society and the province at large.

Clark worked his way around the room, pressing palms with some of the most respected spiritual leaders in the province. Some of the guests — invited at the premier's request — included such diverse individuals as Archbishop Adam Exner of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, Abdul Latif Naumani of the Sunni Muslim Academy of Canada, and Chief Leonard George (son of the late Chief Dan George) of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (Burrard Indian Band).

The guest speaker called by the premier was Gerald Vandezande, national public affairs director of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), a Toronto based non-partisan group concerned with public justice and the common good through socio-economic channels, fiscal fairness, environmental integrity, mutual responsibility and human dignity. Most importantly, CPJ attempts to develop policies from a biblical perspective.

Dialogue between church and state

This first-ever conference was chaired by Clark, who wished to begin a "dialogue between government and spiritual leaders." Clark says that governments are often faced with tough choices, such as having to build hospitals or schools, to raise taxes or to lay off, or to build roads or build ferries.

Said Clark, "We listen to many groups to make choices, but we never consult spiritual leaders. Part of this is the separation of church and state." Nevertheless, he finds it odd that crucial decisions regarding the distribution of wealth, child welfare, and so on, are made in this "vacuum" of lack of consultation with religious leaders.

Clark made clear that he does not wish to see the reintegration

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News

Russian law could prevent churches' teaching, missions

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of Moscow has been "silent" about this provision.

Borshchov also assailed a provision which would allow religious associations to teach religion only to their own "followers," not to outsiders. That provision contradicts the missionary and catechetical activities common to all forms of Christianity, he said.

Forsaking Christ's call

"This is directed against all believers," Borshchov continued. Another section, he said, would threaten Christians by allowing the secular authorities to withdraw the registration of religious groups which are thought to break up families. Borshchov cited Christ's call for his disciples to forsake their parents and follow him.

Moscow writer Aleksandr Nezhni, like Borshchov a practising Orthodox Christian, told the press conference that if the parliament's bill becomes law, Russia will become a "pseudo-Orthodox country" in which Christ is truly followed only by people on the "margins" of society.

In recent weeks similar criticisms have come from other Orthodox sources. In an article published on July 3 by the Paris emigre journal *Russian Thought*, Moscow priest Georgi Chistyakov wrote that the bill would create a situation in which "religion must be conditioned by the nationality of the believer. We will now be instructed to confess Orthodoxy not from the strength of our personal choice" but simply by secular law.

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St. Basil's Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow. The Orthodox Church could also be restricted if Yeltsin signs the religion bill.

Joining Borshchov and Kovalyov as signers of the appeal to Yeltsin were Larisa Bogoraz, widow of the dissident writer Yuri Daniel; Liudnila Alekseeva, chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group; and Lev Ponomaryov, head of Moscow's Inter-Regional Human-Rights Centre.

The world cares

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, the largest U.S.-based international human-rights organization, released a July 8 letter to Russian President Yeltsin calling on him not to accept the bill.

Diederick Lohman, director of the group's Moscow office, told another July 9 press conference that parliament's bill "in no way meets European standards" and that if Yeltsin signs it Russia's membership in the Council of Europe will become "senseless."

'Other activities' gone

The group's appeal to Yeltsin, signed by Human Rights Watch executive director Holly Cartner, called special attention to a crucial amendment which was quietly slipped into the text of the bill between its June 18 second reading and June 23 third reading in the lower house of parliament, and never debated on the floor of either house.

The earlier version would have granted to so-called "religious groups" — the less privileged of the two new categories of religious association created by the bill — the right to engage in charitable activities and "other activities," even though these groups would not have the status of "legal personalities" under Russian law. But the final version omitted that phrase, giving "religious groups" only the right to conduct "worship services, religious ceremonies and rituals."

The Human Rights Watch letter said that the specific omission of the phrase "other rights" before final approval "indicates the clearly expressed intent of the State Duma to limit the activities of religious groups to the performance of worship services, religious ceremonies and rituals."

Human Rights Watch suggested that the difference between the rights of "religious groups" and "religious organizations" contradicts the European Convention on Human Rights — particularly that document's Article 14 on religious discrimination and Article 9 on limits on the free expression of religious convictions.

Stormy protest predicted

The letter to Yeltsin also drew attention to the vagueness of some of the bill's provisions, warning that they could be "interpreted by local authorities in such a way as to violate rights and freedom of conscience...."

Human Rights Watch pointed out that all members of the Council of Europe are obliged to observe the European Convention on Human Rights, and noted that Russia is also bound by the religious-freedom provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Lohman predicted a "stormy protest" in Europe if Yeltsin signs the bill.

Clark seeks advice of religious leaders

... continued from page 1

and marriage of church and state. However, he is interested in the help of religious leaders in flushing out and assessing choices and options facing B.C. as it approaches the new century. These include how to create jobs, how the economy's wealth should be distributed and how to deal with persistently high levels of unemployment.

Job creation a challenge

In his address to the approximately 25 spiritual leaders and media representatives, Vandezande said he wished to initiate a dialogue with the province's religious leaders and the provincial government, a "dialogue about core values and policy priorities, particularly as they relate to the challenge of job creation."

Vandezande alluded to the problems of chronically high unemployment as a matter of a misdirected value paradigm: value is placed on the economic worth of a product and not on the worth of the work or the individual person.

Vandezande stated that increased efficiency in manufacturing leads to the "paradoxical conclusion ... that the elimination of employment, however regrettable, serves our society's predominant value, namely increased income and consumption in a relentless pursuit of an ever-higher material standard of living."

Vandezande's model of the redistribution of wealth and the elimination of poverty seemed like an attempt to solve problems with which governments have been struggling for years. And he often alluded to the "Justice is Every Step" prototype offered by CPJ in its espousing of justice, love, mutuality and responsible stewardship.

Time to work together

Remi de Roo, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Victoria, agreed it is "time to work together to find solutions rather than fight each other" to serve the public interest and the common good.

By redefining values Vandezande hopes the religious leaders of B.C. will be able to assist Clark in dealing with policies concerning the redistribution of wealth and fiscal policies which will "reflect these priorities."

Disdains media

In his closing remarks, Vandezande urged the government, "spiritual leaders and the media, to join the dialogue, the public reflection and the action needed to promote full-fledged justice for all."

Clark, however, seemed to have a lesser view of the media and its role; he was unabashed in his mentioning three times that the media was to be dismissed from the room for the later closed meeting. Once he referred to "when the media leaves, thank goodness." Clark is not a fan of the media and, on occasion, has been short-tempered and acrid with reporters.

Vandezande understands the importance of the media in disseminating information to the public and notes that politicians are "going to have to live with the media." However, he notes that "modern media is built on the conflict model," which indeed sells more newspapers.

During the closed meeting, Vandezande said that the premier made himself "vulnerable," taking the other spiritual leaders by surprise. And all agreed that the dialogue should continue between religious leaders and government leaders.

Must address specifics

According to Vandezande, those "around the table all organized the interconnection of faith, values and public interest," adding that they "must go beyond generalities and deal with specifics."

But there was no consensus as to how this dialogue should occur nor how often. That, however, was one of the challenges left to the participants of the conference. And Clark made it clear that he and his office are receptive and willing participants.

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Saskatchewan refuses to expand pay equity

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and a group of 353 women recently asked their province's government to bring in stronger pay equity legislation. But Judy Bradley, Saskatchewan's Minister for the Status of Women, says that new legislation probably won't be introduced for four or five years.

Currently, Saskatchewan has a limited pay equity law that covers only government and crown corporation employees. The provincial government wants to monitor the effects of this law before introducing a law to cover the private sector, explains Bradley.

COURTESY DONNA SCOTT

Donna Scott

The Pay Equity Coalition of Saskatchewan has gathered the signatures of 353 women on a petition requesting the government to deal more effectively with wage discrimination. The petition asks Saskatchewan to address the wage discrimination experienced by each of the women who signed the petition. Coalition co-ordinator Della MacNeil explains that the women work in traditionally female jobs, such as clerical, childcare and library work.

Ontario comprehensive

"We have looked at the situation in other provinces," MacNeil says. Ontario was the first province to have a comprehensive pay equity act which covers both the private and public sectors. Quebec is developing similar legislation which should be in place by November, she says.

Donna Scott is chief commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. She says the commission recently received the coalition's petition and passed it on to the government. It was "a very unique approach," says Scott. Usually, individual women, rather than groups, register complaints.

Last July, the commission conducted a review of the provincial human rights code and made its own recommendation to the government: stronger pay equity laws should be implemented.

Scott says, "We had hoped the government would act on it sooner than in four to five years. There is a continuing gap between wages for men and women, and it is a concern."

At present, the only recourse women in the private sector have if experiencing wage discrimination is to take complaints to the human rights commission.

Cost or principle?

Ed Grootenboer, executive director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, speculates that Saskatchewan is taking its time with new pay equity laws while it calculates the cost.

Saskatchewan is likely learning from the example of Ontario's former NDP government, which introduced broad pay equity rules seven years ago, says Grootenboer. In that case, "the [NDP] government couldn't abide its own idealism" and ended up giving only small pay increases to women, rather than the large increases it was first considering. For instance, female healthcare workers in nursing homes got only a 35 cent-per-hour wage increase.

Grootenboer finds it ironic that the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has asked the government to bring in new laws on this issue. "The government is being told what to do by something the government created itself. The government is sub-contracting its duties." Yet he believes such commissions can be "a good check and balance" in the system.

Grootenboer thinks more legislation on pay equity is not a good solution. "The more governments get involved, the more unjust solutions become." Quotas, for example, can lead to reverse discrimination, he asserts.

To achieve pay equity, employers, trade unions and others should work together, Grootenboer says. "It's everyone's responsibility."

No accountability

He acknowledges that pay equity is "a sound democratic principle." It is most often applied to women because women are the major group of people receiving unfair wages.

At present, Ontario has the most comprehensive pay equity law of any province. But ironically, the present Conservative government repealed the province's Employment Equity Act two years ago, and has successfully fought off a constitutional challenge of its decision, according to the *Globe and Mail*.

In mid-July, Mr. Justice Paul Dilks of the Ontario Court General Division agreed with provincial lawyers that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not require governments to legislate employment equity or to maintain existing laws. Dilks wrote: "Given societal systematic discrimination, such inequality is not of the government's creation; it is a societal problem, one which the government may well address but which it is under no obligation under the Charter to do so."

Henry Salomons, treasurer for the Canadian Christian Business Federation, says the effect of Ontario's repealing of the employment equity law is that "psychologically, businesses feel less pressure about who they hire."

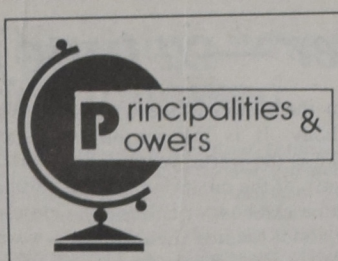
'Not a serious problem'

Salomons does not see a need for more pay equity legislation. "I believe government has to interfere only if there's injustice," he says. "I think government should review case-by-case scenarios instead of demanding across-the-board legislation."

Pay equity legislation is "not effective," insists Salomons. "People will pay what they can get away with whether there's legislation or not." Salomons sees provincial human rights commissions as a good alternative for people who have complaints about unfair wages.

Usually pay inequity is dealt with by raising the salaries of some employees, but Salomons would prefer to see some employees' salaries reduced to produce a "level playing field" at businesses. He believes that there is currently not a serious pay equity problem for women.

Rights and going topless



David T. Koyzis

Last December the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned a lower court's conviction of Gwen Jacob on the charge of indecency, thereby ruling that women in this province have the right to go topless in public. The court's decision was wrong for two reasons.

First, it is based on a narrow understanding of rights, and second, rather than settling an issue to the satisfaction of the larger community, it has effectively sowed the seeds of further conflict.

As legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon has pointed out, not only do we North Americans tend to reduce discussion of complex political issues to a simplistic "rights talk," but we erroneously view rights as if they were absolute. If I have a right to something, then it is assumed that that right is unlimited, either by the sensitivities of others or by the canons of common sense. Although I may be prohibited from yelling "fire" in a crowded theatre, I should be able to say virtually anything else I have a mind to say, and anyone who objects is deemed a threat to my rights.

Can't legislate gut reactions

In this particular case, Ms. Jacob argued that, because men have the right to remove their shirts in public, so should women; otherwise equality of rights is breached. Of course, it doesn't take a legal scholar to notice that men and women are not the same anatomically, and that a topless woman is sexually provocative in a way that a topless man is not. A court can decree that women have the right to bare their breasts in public, but it cannot decree that the latter will no longer be sexually provocative to men. It is ironic that, as the law is increasingly called upon to deal with incidents of sexual harassment, the Court of Appeal has handed down a decision that is likely to increase their frequency.

Many, if not most, Canadians believe they have a right not to be confronted by, or to have their children exposed to, naked female breasts against their will. Again, the court cannot decree that people should suddenly discard this belief, even if it seems inegalitarian or unenlightened. Cultures do change, of course, and there may come a day when breasts are no more provocative to most people than ankles or stomachs are now. Yet that is not for a court to decide, and if it tries to do so, it risks creating needless social conflict.

Practical realities

A wiser and more just approach would recognize sexual and social realities and would refrain from assuming that an abstract conception of equal rights must always take precedence. It would acknowledge that people are more than atomistic rights-bearing individuals and that they are embedded in communities which make legitimate claims upon them and to which they are responsible in some measure for their actions.

The court has not done our young people a favor by reinforcing the typically immature belief that they have a right to act as they please without regard to social consequences. Ontario, and Canada as a whole, might well learn from European countries which have largely avoided such conflict by designating certain beaches and parks as "clothing optional." There, if people wish to doff their clothing, they can do so in these special areas, and any who would take offence simply stays away. Such solutions may not be dressed up in the language of equal rights, but they are nevertheless effective in avoiding conflict and in doing justice to the diversity of citizens with their varying sensibilities.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Although he doffs his trademark bowtie during the summer months, he usually keeps his shirt on.

Guest Editorial

Summer — a time for celebration

I look forward to the summer like a child anticipating a birthday. It is the season of celebration! The cake is the warm weather, the ice cream is the beauty of the creation bursting with new growth and a rainbow of colors. The birds, busy bustling about feeding their young, provide the birthday song. Bright stars at night, after long hours of sunlight, are candles that glitter brightly. It is time to linger and savor the resplendence of God's gift of creation.

But first, there are a few things I have to do. The house needs a good cleaning, the closets are a mess, there are weeds in the garden and my husband has just stripped the wallpaper in the hall. Yes, the summer is also the time for all the odd jobs that don't seem to get done in the busyness of family, church and work life. Summer may bring different routines, but there is still lots to do (especially for parents with small children). Even though summer may have a unique, perhaps slower pace, and we may have time to get away from routines, there still never seems to be enough time.

Time. We have such strange terms to describe it. It drags or flies; we wear it on our wrists and it hangs on our walls; we give it to some people and we take it from others; we use it and waste it. Regardless of our rhetoric, we have no control over time. It is constant; there are always 24 hours in a day. Despite that knowledge, every summer I promise myself that in the seasons to come, I will take more time to "be at rest," and I will make more time for the things I really enjoy doing. I want to carry the balance summer brings my soul into the other seasons of the year.

But how can I make the celebration of summer last longer? I realize that I have learned well the Protestant work ethic. Hard work is good. "Idle hands are the devil's tools." Most of my days are filled with the many routines and tasks of family, work and church commitments. There is little time wasted. However, I have not been as successful at learning to find authentic, inner rest. In the celebration of summer, I feel very near to God; this brings peace and tranquillity even though there is lots of "stuff" to do. It is that serenity that must be extended to deal with the cold, drab days of winter that I dislike so much.

Things consume time

For most of us there are always so many things to do; it is hard to carry the blessing of summer into the busyness of a "normal" day. There must be a way to make more time, or at least to use time more effectively. But when I think about this concept it seems very strange. How does one "make" time?

Many of my daily activities take a required amount of time. Family and church commitments come first. Work follows in the inventory of things that must be done. Sleep is also a necessity, although, for me, it is one of the easier areas to cut. But cutting sleep often means being less productive, so this is really not a constructive solution. Taking a vacation may be a good option, but it is not always practical, comes with its own work, and does not always provide "rest."

A time of inner peace

Now that it is summer, despite the jobs waiting to be done, there is a quiet lull from the clamor and noise of everyday life. The splendor and magnificence that I experience in creation fills me with a reverence and calm that I find nowhere else. This intimate connection with my Maker provides the complete rest that is so much needed in our chaotic, hectic world. The reprieve of summer and being in my garden summons me to time with God, family and friends. This brings a renewed personal harmony and joy to my busy life.

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." In the list of parameters that this beautiful chapter presents, there is time for all the emotions, for all the seasons, for all the good and bad that life brings our way. And then we may "eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil — this is the gift of God" (Eccles. 3:13). This is the birthday gift that summer gives me: a deep contentment and satisfaction because God gives me permission to stop. He draws me close to himself and gives me permission to relax and be undisturbed about all the activities, all the frustrations, all the noise, confusion and clutter of life.

It's about priorities

Fall will come. And winter. It will be very busy again with everyone going back to school, with meetings at church, teaching Sunday school, preparations for Christmas, family gatherings, kids needing help, marking, report cards and snow. My car will probably stall and I will complain about the horrible cold and wish it were summer. Work will pile up around me and it will be hectic again. I will get tired again. I will look for more time to do things and of course I won't find it.

Then I will need to remind myself that it's not about "making time." It is about priorities and slowing down. It is about pausing and taking the time for spiritual, emotional and mental rest. It is about taking the time I need to be close to God. That seems to be easy as I celebrate the splendor of summer. It takes more effort and commitment in the other seasons of the year. That makes it even more necessary. Without it life becomes a mad rush, or as Shakespeare put it, "much ado about nothing."

Communion is constant

We will experience distinct seasons in all the aspects of our lives. It is in the nearness I find to God in the celebration of summer that there is strength to deal with the dreaded, harsh days of winter.

With the gift of peace that summer gives me, I will, God willing, persist and be refreshed again by the beauty of this wonderful season. In whatever season of our lives, in whatever way we do it, we must develop ways to be in communion with God. It will not always be summer, but I am blessed to serve a God who gladly gives the blessings of summer in all the seasons of the year. With that assurance in my heart, there will be "time" for everything else.

Willy Nywening

Willy Nywening is an English teacher in Strathroy, Ont.

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Letters

You missed the boat

When I read your editorial of June 27, I thought: You sure missed the boat.

I don't blame you for it, because an unexpected question from an unbeliever can stun us a lot quicker than one from a believer, because a non-believer has what is to us an unfamiliar view of God, and can come up with unfamiliar questions. I would have been stunned too, at your age.

But you never stop growing, or at least you never should stop growing in understanding God's grace, love and wisdom. When I read the question "Do you feel obligated to God?" I thought, why *should* your relatives, as unbelievers, feel obligated to a strange God? But we are children of God's perfect family. And children in a happy family know by instinct that they are obligated to their parents.

And when we realize that we belong to a royal family, we know that we have a high calling. Not only that, but we have a big reason not only to feel obliged, but to be tremendously thankful and joyful because he has rescued us from hell.

Isn't that worth everything?

Tell the facts

If not, if you like the worldly life and its pleasures more than me, Christ said, you are not worthy of me. None of us is worthy of him of ourselves. But in saying this Jesus shows his displeasure with those who love worldly life.

So if a child of a good family has every reason to be happy and to trust and gladly obey his or her parents, how many more reasons do we have, for God has shown his love in Jesus much more than any parent ever can do.

Unbelievers may not understand all of it, but they should at least hear the facts of what God has done for us. For our assurance is not based on feelings but on facts.

I have learned to look at life's questions and problems in the light of God's point of view. A father does not ask his child: What should I do, or what should I give you to eat? He knows far better.

Our heavenly Father said in love: trust as a child; be busy as an ambassador; obey as a soldier; prepare and long for me as a bride.

As a king, rule as Adam and Eve were supposed to do; as a priest, pray and teach your children; as a prophet, know and proclaim God's will.

When you see your life in the light of these examples, the essence of Scripture becomes clearer.

Jim Aukema
Chatham, Ont.

Story may sink troubled couples

I was concerned and disturbed when I finished reading the story "When a Soul Waits" (CC, June 27). Whether the specifics of the story line are fact or fiction is of no concern to me. What is important, however, is the message real live couples in similar situations (or different, but equally troubled) will acquire through reading this story. Furthermore, the end does not justify the means.

In real life, a schism of this magnitude between marital partners is rarely the sole responsibility of one individual (namely the wife here), as portrayed by the author.

High horse needs trimming

I cannot help but be curious what Greg might be getting out of his role as he looks down from a moral height on his wife's blameworthiness as she scampers around trying to make amends. And what about his "patient and generous" nature as his wife so lovingly describes him? How do these adjectives really fit into this relationship nightmare? What could it be a camouflage for? And how would his "not having the energy to leave" stance fit into the overall picture?

I could ask many more questions along these lines but these are a few to alert your readers that couple-dynamics in a troubled marriage such as this are much more complex and complicated than suggested by the author.

For instance, a mentally healthy partner does not need to withdraw from the other partner to the extent portrayed in the article. Neither would a mentally healthy partner be part of a dead marriage for so long since he or she would much more readily seek couple counselling in an effort to get the marriage on track.

But foremost, a mentally healthy partner *first* asks him- or herself: What may be *my* contribution to the scenario in our marriage? Then the other partner can be clear about what may be his or her contribution. Consequently, discussions about conflicting marital issues revolve around mutual contributions and responsibilities.

None of what I have said above, however, cancels out the deeper relationship we often experience with God as we walk the complex and often confusing road of marital despair. But for every person who clings to the comforting robe of Christ and finds eventual acceptance and love there is another who exhaustingly treads the dark and murky waters of painful, skewed relationships, barely keeping head above water. And article like "When a Soul Waits" might hasten his or her drowning.

Arlene Van Hove
Surrey, B.C.

Alpha a blessing when guidelines followed

I thought that I should clarify one of the points in the story "Alpha program meets opposition" (CC, June 13). It states that I approve of the guidelines proposed by the Alpha review group at St. Paul's in Toronto [which had a negative experience with the Alpha basic Christianity program].

While I feel that sensitivity is vital in the Alpha program, I do not agree with St. Paul's proposed guidelines. To have each participant interviewed by one of the parish clergy would be counterproductive, and particularly to lapsed churchgoers or the "unchurched" would be downright intimidating. They would simply not come.

Imagine also a pastor with two or more congregations, or as in our church [in Niagara Falls], where there is only one ordained priest in a large, busy parish. To be faced with 60 or more interviews would leave no time for parish duties.

More important, I do not recall any evidence suggesting these revised guidelines in the teaching from Holy Trinity, Brompton, in London, England [where Alpha originated]. We always have an ordained priest at our "Holy Spirit weekend," and participants are free to choose how they receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit — in private, in their group, or corporately with the rest in attendance.

It is vital that all those running an Alpha program remember to keep faithfully to the guidelines developed by Alpha's originators, in order to achieve the success of the parent church in England. Further, the leadership must be responsible to their pastor, and he or she must trust them implicitly.

The leaders must be keenly aware that the guidelines *must* be followed (resources are available). Even the translation of the manual into another language, for instance, must be approved by Alpha in London to be sure that nothing of importance is changed, however unintentionally. In short, follow the course as it is set out. Modify only to keep within the "comfort zone" of the [local] church.

Founders offer enthusiastic help

There is to be a leadership conference in October of this year for the Anglican Diocese of Niagara. Workshops offered have been designed to profile the experience of parishes and leaders who have "made innovations and taken risks." Alpha is one of those offered, and will be conducted by two from St. John's, myself and Valerie Williams, our administrator.

If a course is having problems, or one is having any difficulty, or divison, communicate with Holy Trinity, Brompton. We started from scratch, and have asked for advice on more than one occasion. We have found them full of enthusiasm, and they have always been more than happy to field any questions we have thrown at them.

It *has* to be unusual if one parish having difficulties makes the headlines.

Dr. Joe Eden
President, Alpha St. John
Church of St. John the Evangelist
Niagara Falls, Ont.

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Iced tea breaks Can/Am stereotype

Marian Van Til

I think I have a bi-national soul. By that I mean I suffer from a kind of patriotic split-personality. I was born, and remain, an American citizen and currently live in the U.S. after almost 16 years living in Ontario. Every day I drive into Canada to work and home to the U.S. at the end of the day (a big 15-minute drive!). The bulk of my friends are Canadians; my church community is split between the two countries.

Having a foot in two worlds creates some occasional contortions, but it does give an uncommon perspective on the differences between Canadians and Americans (a subject of seemingly endless fascination).

Witch's brew

I want to talk about one of those differences, one that, on deeper thought, might turn out to be symptomatic of whatever wedge lies between us.

That difference relates to habits in iced tea drinking. A country's culinary and drinking habits are not to be taken lightly, after all! They are veritable windows on the stomach, which, in turn, is the way to the heart (or at least, to a man's heart), we're told. With that in mind:

Try ordering iced tea in an American restaurant. Almost everywhere (except maybe Iowa) you'll get bracingly strong, brewed tea on ice. Simple. Unadulterated. To which you add your own sugar and/or lemon, if you wish.

However, if you're in an American restaurant near the border you'll likely get asked when you order: "Sweetened or unsweetened?" That's because (always out to please, or to make a buck off Canadians) proprietors know that Canadians drink pre-sweetened, pre-lemoned iced tea; a witch's brew that comes ready-made or instant; either way, laden with preservatives and others chemicals.

Canadian restaurants near the American border, however, apparently want to assert their Canadian spirit by refusing to cater to their American neighbors' tastes: you drink pre-sweetened/-lemoned tea or settle for water. (If you're an American and you're desperate, you can ask for a glass of ice and a cup of hot tea, which will definitely reinforce in your Canadian host's mind his stereotype of picky, pushy Americans.)

Does not compute

Now I ask you: what is wrong with this picture? Aren't Canadians supposed to like the simple, "real" things in life, while Americans gravitate to plastic, bells-and-whistles and instant gratification? Aren't Canadians accommodating and hospitable while Americans are selfish and aggressive? What is this strange aberration? And where did it come from?

Ontario is crawling with people of English descent, whose influence is still strongly felt: people who won't put up with any nonsense when it comes to tea. So why do they drink artificial iced tea with "sugar" and "lemon" already in it? Iced tea is still *tea*, isn't it? And deserves the same high standard as hot tea, doesn't it? Isn't this practice rather like serving coffee with cream and sugar already in it? And who would do that? Dutch Canadians, coffee lovers that they are, certainly wouldn't. So why are English Canadians willing to drink tainted, doctored tea?

This is serious: a whole generation or more of Canadians has grown up not knowing what *real* iced tea tastes like. It's just as sad as thinking real soup comes from a can, which Dutch Canadians also know, of course, is decidedly not so.

These are vital questions. Can anybody help me find the answers?

Brouwer more Canadian than you think

Regarding your CRC synod story "Synod executive strong on Canadian content" (June 27):

For the record, the "Canadian content" of synod vice-president Rev. Wayne Brouwer is just a little stronger than reported in *Christian Courier*. Rev. Brouwer was ordained in the Christian Reformed Church of Iron Springs, Alta., which he served from 1980-1985, after which he left to teach theology in Nigeria. It's important to keep the facts straight!

Hank Puurveen
Iron Springs, Alta.

Whither ICS?

I read the June 13 report of the ICS conference on Bible interpretation with a measure of growing unrest. A hermeneutic of suspicion? A "Yes, Yes," response. Yes, to the classical interpretation and another Yes (forgetting previous interpretations) reading the passage as if for the first time?

Ah, that sounds good and wonderful and definitely necessary — thus *altering* it in the light of our contemporary situation. That latter part seems to lead us awfully far in the direction of the so-called new theology. I, for one, am rather suspicious of this kind of hermeneutics of suspicion. I think we should say "No, No" to that.

I can't help but raise a question: *Quo vadis*, ICS?

Lammert Slofstra
St. Catharines, Ont.

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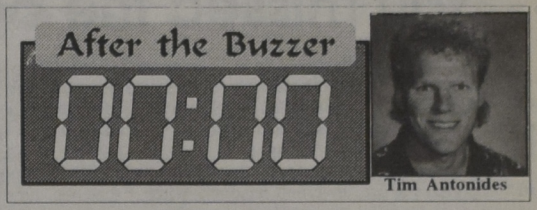

Tim Antonides

The CFL isn't dead...

The Canadian Football League is in trouble. It didn't really hit me until last year when I sat in the 60,000- seat B.C. Place stadium. I and only 8,400 others watched the Lions play the Stampeders. Go to Calgary, Hamilton, even Regina. Grab some Cracker Jacks and have a seat in the local football stadium. It will strike you immediately. People aren't coming out to watch, let alone tune in on television. The league is riding a wave of pessimism and self-defeat.

I don't lie awake at night worrying about it. Still, it's sad. The downfall (I'm not using the word "death") of the CFL is a microcosm of the ugly realities of modern professional sport.

This won't be a tirade on the evils of commercialism, ethnocentrism and Nike Air helium-injected runners. But in a nutshell, here is what I see as having happened to the CFL.

One big happy family

Earlier this century, a bunch of nice guys who liked football started up a league with nine teams. It differed from American football in that it had three downs, a larger field and lots of passing and kicking. A far superior brand of football to its American counterpart, its Canadian inventors felt.

Some of the teams were privately owned, some community-owned. Regional and East-West rivalries were born. Players tended to stay with the same team. The stadiums were filled, tickets were reasonably priced, the popcorn was fresh. Canadian football was celebrated — fast, exciting, hard-hitting, gutsy. The CFL was one, big, happy family. (There was even a hard-core of football fans in the U.S. who live within TV transmitting range of CFL games who became hooked.)

Greed came to town

Then greed came. I'm tempted to cite what Proverbs 15 says about a greedy man who brings trouble to his family, but that would be too didactic. Besides, in a complex, postmodern age, it couldn't be that simple, could it?

Greed came to town in the '70s. In the '80s, it took over. In the '90s, few people think twice about it. Its manifestation? The CFL went "Vegas-style." Many of its best players were wooed by the high salaries in the NFL. A mindset crept into the living room of the Canadian football fan: NFL teams have higher-paid players, bigger stadiums and more TV coverage. Therefore, the CFL must be mediocre.

I almost make it sound like the CFL is a normative creation while the NFL is the opposite. I don't feel this way. I do feel, however, that the reasons for dismissing the viability of the CFL have been falsely created by an image. If you want to see that image, tune in to CBS on Sundays during football season.

Christians know better than to be sucked in by a media-fed set of half-truths. If you like NFL football better, watch it and enjoy it. But don't denigrate the CFL because of the results of the NFL's purchasing power. If you like Canadian football, support it. It needs it right now.

I'm not a crusader for the CFL. If people are going to turn their backs on a Canadian institution, though, it needs to be for a legitimate reason. I just can't see that any such reasons exist. Canadian football is refreshingly real. Gritty. Earthy. Yet classy. Very little glitz. Kind of like Canada, eh?

Tim Antonides teaches Grade 5 and coaches basketball at Surrey Christian School, Surrey, B.C.

Book Review

Stranger than it used to be, but still the Truth

Anita Huang

Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be

By J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh.
ISBN: *0-8306-856-1, 250 pp. Toronto: InterVarsity Press, 1995. Softcover.*

Jehovah's Witnesses regularly come to our doors promising salvation. Muslims kneel towards the East to pray. Buddhists place gifts of oranges before their god. Strangers promise instant happiness or better lives if we join their health spa, music club or website chat-line, believe a certain ideal, subscribe to a certain worldview.

We live in a "postmodern" culture in which *truth* itself has become relative. Diverse voices demand to be heard. Which one has the right to claim its belief as truth? Amidst that relativism it has become more and more difficult for Christians to find their place. The secular world asks: What right do Christians have to claim the "truth" of Scripture when so many other voices sound equally legitimate? And Christians may wonder: How does the authority of the Bible fit in?

Still strong and relevant

Middleton and Walsh deliberately and intentionally choose to "look around" in order to come to grips with reality. And the reality is that we are living in an increasingly pluralistic and relativistic society characterized by an "anything goes" mentality. In such a reality, where "truth is stranger than it used to be," we need to know where the Gospel stands.

The authors discuss how the Scriptures stand in relation to those rising voices. They describe clearly the spirits in the society we live in today, and how we Christians can respond to the crisis of postmodernism. They address the shift from modernism to postmodernism, and show that even amidst the confusion of differing voices all struggling for recognition, the Scriptures still speak a strong and relevant message of hope for the world.

Worldview questions revisited

Dividing the book into two parts, "The Postmodern Condition" and "The Resources of Scripture," the authors address the four worldview questions they proposed in their earlier book, *The Transforming Vision.* Walsh and Middleton show us that by addressing "Who are we?", "Where are we?", "What's wrong?", "What's the remedy?" we can better understand our place as Christians in the world we live in today.

Middleton and Walsh not only clearly describe the postmodern crisis, but show how we Christians can address it, and thus, "find our place at the table." According to the authors, the Scriptures, read "in light of postmodern concerns," do indeed speak a "redemptive word of healing for our times," just as they have always done.

Discussing difficult concepts in a personable, engaging tone, the authors do not over-simplify a serious topic, but make the issues-at-hand easier for the reader to grasp. *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be* helps us take a fresh look at the Scriptures for our times.

Although we should value the freedom that comes with diversity, we cannot ignore the crisis of relativism that characterizes postmodern discourse. Middleton and Walsh address these concerns with an openness and an honesty that readers will appreciate.

Anita Huang is pursuing a master's degree in English language and professional writing at the University of Waterloo, currently interning as an assistant production editor at Prentice Hall Canada.

Ohio Christians fight porn

Terry Whitsitt

PAINESVILLE, Ohio — In Canada and the U.S. many stores that deal in pornography and other "adult-oriented" businesses are moving into family shopping areas. That's the case in Painesville, Ohio, 30 miles east of Cleveland.

A cigar and newspaper business in Painesville Township, across the street from the Lake County Fairground, has moved into pornography more heavily over the years. Many Christian groups have wanted to do something about it, but they've been unable to find much more than verbal support for their efforts.

Sells better than cigars?

In the last half-year a larger, flashier adult video store moved into a recently vacated national shoe store building next door to the "cigar store." And within weeks of that, a bikini bar opened in the front half of a national hardware chain store one block away.

This latest influx of "adult" businesses has led a group of local pastors and ministry leaders to begin an organization called Partners for Family Values. They have bought a billboard a block east of the stores, and a large ad in the local newspaper. And they've begun to picket in front of the stores on Saturday nights from 6 to 10 p.m. This time was chosen by organizers because of the high traffic during those hours.

No usual business

It was not business as usual on Sat., May 10, a date purposely picked to begin the protest because it was Mother's Day eve. That first evening of picketing brought out some 300 men, women and children who oppose pornography. While the protesters marched the stores involved had fewer than three customers arrive — and they left quickly.

Pastor Phil Volman of Shiloh Christian Church in nearby Leroy, was spokesperson for the group. He told picketers, "We're in this for the long haul. The people who run these businesses think that we're going to come out here for a few Saturdays and picket; then after we have soothed our consciences, we'll run back to our little churches and sing our little Jesus songs and give up. Well, they're wrong! We can't stop this effort until this cancer has left our community!"

TERRY WHITSITT

Partners for Family Values picket porn shops in Painesville, Ohio.

His words brought a cheer from the picketers. The air of the event was almost festive, with many picketers singing gospel choruses and waving to the many passing cars who honked and gave other signs of their approval.

The event brought out reporters from all three network television stations in Cleveland, and newspaper reporters as well.

A local Christian ministry has shown its support for Partners for Family Values by donating space on its Internet site and has set up and maintained the pages (http://members.harborcom.net/-proclaim/pffv.html). The site is meant to tell the world of their actions and to keep local supporters informed of the schedule of the events taking place.

Partners for Family Values say they hope they can "inspire and motivate others to stand up for morality and godliness in their own communities across the United States, Canada and the world."

Nike, Muslims collide over flaming logo

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Nike will recall 38,000 pairs of shoes with a logo that offended Muslims because it resembles the Arabic word "Allah." Nike also agreed to apologize to Muslims for any unintentional offense. In exchange, Muslim leaders agreed not to support a boycott of Nike products.

Nike Vice President Martin Coles said in a statement, "While we never intended to offend, we did; we have done everything possible to communicate our sincere apologies and to address issues related to the distribution of any products offensive to the Muslim community." Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said that because shoes get dirty and sweaty, it is offensive "to have the name of God on a shoe." The logo was meant to look like flames.

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Church

Study probes what keeps seminary professors vital

ROBERT VANDERVENNEN

Ken Badley (left) and Gordon T. Smith are studying older seminary professors.

Robert VanderVennen

WILLOWDALE, Ont. — Some professors become dull in the last decade of their teaching, while others are exciting and fresh to the end. What are factors which set the creative, older teachers apart from those who seem asleep on their feet?

Ken Badley and Gordon T. Smith got a grant from the Churches' Council on Theological Education to interview 25-30 dynamic Canadian seminary professors age 55 and older to see what keeps them alive and on the cutting edge. Badley formerly taught education at the Institute for Christian Studies and Smith is academic dean at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina. In late May they reported their provisional findings based on their first 19 face-to-face interviews at a conference at Ontario Bible College.

Love is the key

Vital professors love students, they found. Students have changed, the social scene has changed, and so have methods of teaching, but through it all, good professors love working with students. Helping students develop is more important to them than academic research or climbing the professional ladder. Teaching is a delight, a constant source of satisfaction. They experience it as a calling.

Exceptional seminary professors have a strong connection to the church, whether the church is evangelical, mainline or Roman Catholic. The church is a source of joy and strength to them, and a place to be ministered to. Many serve part-time in church positions in addition to their teaching.

Vital professors are settled in their particular institution and they fully accept the mission of the school. The aims of a seminary may change over time, but these professors embrace the change and gladly accept what the school stands for. There is a good fit between the excellent professor and the school.

Outstanding professors have a vital spirituality. They nurture their relation to God through routines of prayer and spiritual discipline. Growth in faith is important to them.

Suffering with grace

Nearly all mature seminary professors have endured tragedy, and often they have been deeply hurt by an institution they have served. But they are notable in their lack of anger, bitterness and resentment. These are people who suffer with grace. They are intentional, not passive, about their life and work. They don't blame others for problems they have encountered.

In short, these successful and appreciated teachers have matured with serenity and are emotionally secure. They are secure in their relationship with God, in their relationship with students and in commonality of purpose with their colleagues.

What may be surprising in Badley and Smith's interviews is that these outstanding professors did not emphasize continuing scholarly development, keeping fresh in their academic fields. They seemed to take that for granted. What surfaced in the interviews was the kinds of personal qualities these professors seemed to feel were the most important aspects of their careers.

Although this study is restricted to seminary professors, Badley and Smith believe that the same kinds of characteristics are also true for teachers in other fields in institutions of higher Christian education.

Reformed Ecumenical Council welcomes five new members

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — The interim committee of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) accepted five new member churches at its meeting in South Africa, June 6-12. REC is headquartered in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The churches have immediately become members under REC's new member rules, although the decision will need ratification at the next REC assembly, in Indonesia in 2000.

The new members are:

The Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ, Nigeria. This church becomes the largest REC member, with an estimated attendance of between 1.5 and 2 million persons. It is concentrated in Nigeria's north-central state of Nasarawa.

The Christian Reformed Church, Dominican Republic. This young church has about 9,000 members who meet in more than 200 locations.

The Reformed Church in Mozambique (Mphatso Synod). A product of Dutch Reformed missions, the RCM is emerging with the rest of the country from years of civil unrest. It has 33,000 members, with 40,000 children attending its Sunday school. In 1989 the REC churches aided refugees from this group who had fled to neighboring Malawi.

The Philippine Christian Reformed Church. The PCRC began formally in 1983 after two decades of mission work by the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Today it has 37 organized congregations serving about 5,000 people.

The Church of Central Africa-Presbyterian (Zambia Synod). The CCAP-Zambia joins two other synods of the CCAP (Nkhoma and Harare) as REC members. The CCAP began in Malawi and its Zambia Synod serves mainly Malawian immigrants or migrant workers in Zambia. About 20,000 members attend its 29 congregations.

With the addition of these members, it is estimated that the Christian population attending REC churches is now between seven and eight million — about half of whom live in Nigeria! REC now has 34 member churches in 22 countries.

Reformed Church moves toward unity with mainline denominations

Marian Van Til

MILWAUKEE, Wisc. — The general synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), which met June 14-20, has voted to established "full communion" with three mainline denominations. The RCA has assented to a "Formula of Agreement" between itself, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC).

The formula, which still needs the ELCA's approval, will allow joint participation in worship and the sacraments, pulpit exchanges and the recognizing and sharing of resources among the four denominations. The denominations would maintain their own identities and structures.

Though there is some opposition to the move in the ELCA, that church is expected to approve the move at meetings later this month.

Sharp criticism

The agreement has brought sharp criticism from segments of the RCA because the UCC, which has Reformed roots, is considered by many to be the most theologically liberal church in the U.S. and permits practicing homosexuals to be ordained (it is the only American denomination to do so). The Canadian wing of the RCA, which admits to being somewhat more conservative than its American counterpart, has also been strongly opposed to the *Formula of Agreement.*

RCA leaders insist that the move will not change their church's position on homosexuality or on any theological issue, nor the denomination's guidelines for clergy. Ministers from any of the other denominations who might transfer into the RCA would still be examined by a local RCA classis, reports *The Church Herald,* the official publication of the American segment of the denomination. UCC general secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson has also assured members of his own denomination that "homosexuality is a separate matter" which is not covered by the unity plan.

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'Let us attend!'

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
★ Laura Smit
Al Wolters

"And now, my children, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth.... Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?" (Prov. 7:24; 8:1)

It's been several years now since the notorious "Re-Imagining Conference" was held in Minneapolis at which radical feminist theologians set out to "re-imagine" their faith in novel and largely heretical ways. One of the most publicized activities at this conference was using the name "Sophia" (the Greek word for Wisdom) as the primary name for God at the conference worship services.

Because I found most of the theology done at this conference appalling, and because, as a Presbyterian pastor, I continue to be called upon to apologize for my denomination's role in this event, that conference created in me a distaste for any reference to God as Wisdom. When I am in a worship service in which such language is used, my antennae go up. I grow tense, expecting that I will soon be offended by some unnerving theological innovation.

Because I found most of the theology done at this conference appalling, and because, as a Presbyterian pastor, I continue to be called upon to apologize for my denomination's role in this event, that conference created in me a distaste for any reference to God as Wisdom.

This squeamishness on my part is unfortunate, because the language of Wisdom is an important part of the way in which the Bible talks about God, and generations of Christians have used this language in prayerful and appropriate ways. This came home to me recently when I was attending an Eastern Orthodox service with some friends of mine and noticed that the liturgy repeatedly required us to call out, "O Wisdom!", and that the cantor would say to us: "Let us attend!"

The context of this service was so far removed from any trendy conference espousing theological novelty that I felt none of my usual discomfort with this language. In fact, it reminded me of an earlier time in my Christian life when I found "Wisdom" to be one of the most precious names of God.

Getting hearts of wisdom

The call to attention which was that liturgy's response to Wisdom is also what the book of Proverbs requires from us in response to Wisdom's presence. In Proverbs, Wisdom repeatedly calls out for attention and notice. Listen! Hear! Wake up! Pay attention! Wisdom is to be pursued, sought, prized and treasured.

In contrast to Wisdom, foolishness is presented as a prostitute who tempts people away from faithfulness into adultery. The one who is faithful to God will also be faithful to Wisdom. Wisdom is the pattern for Creation. Only if we pay attention to Wisdom will we understand that pattern and have the ability to live in harmony with it. We are able to be the people God designed us to be only in so far as we are wise people, people who know in what our original design consists and who are willing to pay constant attention to that design in order to be conformed to it.

The world we live in does not encourage this sort of attention. We are taught how to pay attention to our weight and our clothes, to our homes and our cars, to our income and the prestige attached to our jobs. But we pay very little attention to understanding the underlying structures of creation, and still less to our own conformity or lack of conformity with those structures. God has made the world to follow a wise pattern which is both beautiful and good, and which gives him glory. If we are to be wise people, we need to pay attention to everything around us which is beautiful and good, to everything around us which shows God's glory, so that we too may reflect God's wisdom and design.

Jesus Christ is Wisdom

The gospels say that Jesus is the Word that formed creation and the Truth that sets us free. Paul identifies Jesus as the image of the Father, in whom the fullness of God dwells. In 1 Cor. 1:30, he specifically tells us that Jesus "became for us wisdom from God." Christian tradition has thus most often used the title "Wisdom" to refer not to the triune God, but specifically to refer to the Son. In him we see what God's Wisdom looks like. God is made known to us through the person of Christ.

If we want to "attend" to Wisdom, to listen to Wisdom's voice, we need to pay attention to Jesus Christ. By paying attention to him, we may be conformed to his image, becoming what we were designed to be.

I have decided to try to recapture some of this Wisdom language in my own worship. However, in order to avoid the strange and unorthodox constructions of the ReImaginers, that language needs to be firmly connected to the person of Jesus.

Wisdom is not some kinder and gentler person in the Godhead — a new and inoffensive model of divinity designed to appeal to our 20th century sensibilities. Wisdom is a proper name for that very One who, on the cross, expressed the foolish love of God by being willing to die for us. If we are to become wise, he is the one to whom we must pay attention.

Laura Smit is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who is currently doing doctoral work in philosophical aesthetics at Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Armenia contemplates further religious strictures

Felix Corley

YEREVAN, Armenia (Keston) — Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan has declined to sign amendments to a law which will further restrict freedom of conscience and religious organizations in Armenia. On July 7 he sent them back to the National Assemble for further consideration, with a detailed list of objections and suggestions. The National Assembly is now in recess and it is not clear when the bill will be reconsidered.

The bill was approved by the National Assembly on June 9, with 126 members of parliament voting in favor, seven against and three abstaining. According to the Armenian Constitution, the president must sign or reject the law within 21 days.

The bill would have introduced further restrictions on religious organizations other than the Armenian Apostolic Church, to which the overwhelming majority of Armenians traditionally belong. However, in tightening up on the law of June 17, 1991, the amendments did not go as far as the decree "On Measures Legalizing Religious Activities in the Republic of Armenia" signed by President Ter-Petrosyan on Dec. 22, 1993. That decree gave an explicit role to the State Council on Religious Affairs in obstructing non-Armenian Apostolic Church activity in Armenia.

200 members needed

According to the text of the bill, it would require a minimum of 200 members over the age of 18 to form a registered religious organization, compared with 50 of any age in the 1991 law. It would have required state approval for state-owned premises to be rented out for religious use, and prior notification by owners of private property before it could be rented for religious use. State media could be used for religious purposes only after the state had been notified.

The bill would have introduced new requirements for invitations and working trips for people being sent abroad for religious purposes to be "arranged through the state government body authorized by the Armenian government."

The bill would also restrict financial contributions from abroad by adding a ban on the financing of political parties by religious organizations or the financing of religious organizations by political parties.

Rights for the registered

In an important change, the bill would have granted rights only to registered religious organizations, a departure from the 1991 law. This is potentially the most serious point, especially in the light of the requirement that all religious organizations must be re-registered within six months of the new law being passed. Some 40 religious groups are currently registered. The one positive element is the introduction of an article guaranteeing the confidentiality of the confessional and the ban on ministers of religion being interrogated or questioned in court about matters they have learnt in the confessional.

Pressure from nationalists

The bill was initiated by Rafael Papayan, a Soviet-era dissident who is now an MP of the ruling Armenian National Movement and chairperson of the parliamentary committee on education, science, culture and youth. The decision to amend the 1991 law followed great pressure from nationalists and members of the Armenian Apostolic Church angered by the influx and growth of other religious movements — Protestant Christian groups as well as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Hare Krishna movement — in the wake of independence from the Soviet Union.

During discussion of the bill in May, Rafael Papayan claimed that some 10 per cent of the Armenian population (300,000 people) now belonged to "sects." Other leading politicians have spoken out in favor of restrictions on such religious groups and derogatory articles about them frequently appear in the press.

For our Calendar of Events, please turn to page 18

Short Story

Papa Bear and Mom

A Short Story

by
Ruth Lerdal Cummings

"October and the morning's sun. Another day, another try," I told myself. "We'll take to the woods this afternoon." I rose from the pillow and landed my feet on the floor.

"The trees will be gorgeous. First, we'll have breakfast, Goldilocks and I. Like it or not, she can clean while I bake." Goldilocks is my daughter, age sixteen; or is it twenty-six?

In the kitchen I started the coffee and pulled out a waffle mix. Sounds of running water came from the bathroom. Rather early for Saturday, I thought. Later I heard my daughter's step in the hall. "We'll do the work, then bring a lunch with us into Pioneer Woods. It's a wonderful day," I said to the noise that rummaged the closet.

"Can't," came to me from over my shoulder. "Promised Mae I'd be there at nine."

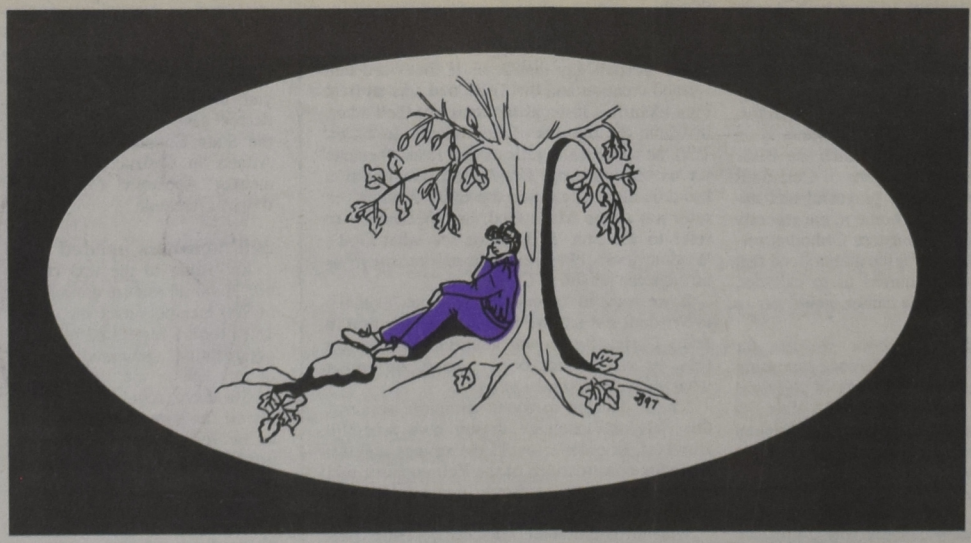
"Goldilocks," I cried, "I've told you not to promise Saturdays without checking." I turned around. My daughter stood in blue T-shirt and jeans, ready for the day. "You call Mae," I commanded. "Tell her you're not coming. I have plans."

Goldilocks's features stiffened. Her arms hung close to her sides. She faced me, not as a lion at bay, but as a snarling lion ready to spring. "Mother," she protested, "we're going shopping and...."

"Goldilocks," I interrupted, "you never told me this, nor did you ask. Just say you can't go this time."

Goldilocks's eyes widened and her cheeks turned a deep pink as they always do when she is angry. She stamped her foot. "I won't, I won't," she screamed. "You always think there is something wrong."

"Stop shouting," I told her. "Who's deaf?"



"I won't call Mae," Goldilocks repeated. "I'm sticking to my first commitment as you've always said I should." This she added with a tiny curtsy and her head went back into the closet.

Seldom have I won a verbal confrontation with anyone. Someone always throws in that proverbial "monkey wrench" as Goldilocks did with her "first commitment" line. I stand and mentally balance both sides.

Within a few moments of wool gathering Goldilocks had found her sweater, purse, and the door. "Be back after lunch. See you then. Bye!" she called over her shoulder.

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She left me so angry that I am ashamed to say I did not answer. My anger steamed with the coffee. I had not held the upper hand. But I would not run after her. "And to think I once dreamed of how I could show her the way through these tumultuous teens," I remembered.

I sat down to the kitchen table. Why must Larry be away now on his building project? What else to do but drink coffee and eat breakfast? I straightened my shoulders. "I'll have my own day in the woods," I said.

After breakfast I called my friend, Amy. I asked her if she wished to join me on my trip. But she had guests. So after errands and chores, I packed my bag lunch.

Shades of yellow and orange greeted me when I reached the big maples. After a while, I found the spot I wanted, an opening between trees. I sat down on my blanket.

All the while thoughts of Goldilocks remained. Her babyhood, her childhood, how we enjoyed those days. But now — now, what a contrast! I ate my lunch. Afterwards I leaned against the trunk of an ash tree. A squirrel scampered in the fallen leaves and looked at me. "If only I could run away from it all," I told my little visitor. "I want to get shed of teenaged problems, teenaged challenges. I'm sick and tired of them." The squirrel turned and ran. I closed my eyes and slept.

******

As I drifted off to sleep I remembered story books. In them I had not felt the crisp air or missed the warmth of the sun hidden above the trees. I had not heard the rustle of their leaves. Nor did I see their reds and golds contrasted against the white of the cottage. Yes, *that* cottage. From where did it emerge? From the hole of a gnarled oak or from the maze of shaded green?

Its arrival was so sudden, yet so expected. My eyes welcomed the sight of it. That cottage, my retreat, my escape from reality. My feet followed the

beaten path to the door. I climbed the steps and knocked. Within a few minutes I saw a huge figure. Papa Bear stood before me.

"Why, it's you," he sputtered.

I met his gaze. "I, I just wanted to ask. May I come in and hibernate with you

and Mama Bear? It's that time of year."

He sniffed. I thought sure he would yawn and stretch like all respectable bears. He just looked. "It isn't very exciting," Papa Bear growled. We're not much company."

"Don't apologize," I said. "I came to escape excitement and company. My teenaged daughter has whirled me through her highs and lows, her girlfriends, her boyfriends, her frustrations, her...."

"Ah, stop complaining," Papa Bear commanded. "Let's go inside." He lifted the latch and we walked in.

As in the pictures of kitchens in my school books (I once read), the table was covered by a checkered cloth. Geraniums sat on the window sill. And Mama Bear stood stirring the porridge.

She turned around and saw me. "Hello," she cried, "why, I know you. You're her mother."

"She wants to hibernate with us," Papa Bear grunted in a shocked tone.

"Now that's unique," Mama Bear said. She picked up a saucepan. "But have some porridge first."

"Just a little," I said, trying not to make a face.

My hostess must have sensed my dislike for porridge. "Try some blueberries over it," she suggested. "You'll like that."

That I did.

Mama Bear sat down to eat with us. "Now," she asked, why would a woman want to hibernate?"

"Oh, I just got to thinking," I replied, "got to thinking how peaceful it would be just to sleep until Goldilocks graduates from high school, or gets a job; just sleep and sleep.

"And Goldilocks?" Mama Bear asked, "what does she think of all this?"

"I don't know," I said blankly. "I never asked her."

"Oh," said Mother Bear.

"Oh," said Father Bear.

I took a long breath. An uncomfortable silence followed. Then I said, "We really don't talk that much any more. If we do, well, it's arguments, disagreements and anger. I, well — I...."

"Like when I chase Baby Bear out to eat more berries for the winter," Papa Bear lamented. "If I've told him once there'll be no more berries when the snow comes, I've told him twenty times."

"Why don't they listen?" Mama Bear sighed.

"Who knows?" I asked. "Who knows the reasons for what young animals do or don't? This winter I'm going to stop wondering or worrying."

"Then in the spring?" Mother Bear wanted to know.

"I'll think about that when it comes," I said.

"These human beings, you never know what they're doing," Papa Bear complained. "But she's all right. Let her stay."

"Well," Mama Bear relented, "go ahead and try it. There will always be honey down here for when you wake up and you're hungry."

* * * * * *

The bed was not just right, but I slept.

For no reason I awakened. Why did a ray of light come from the left? In my dreams I found myself downstairs. I wandered around the house. In the kitchen I saw the bowl of honey and ate. "Goodness," I said to myself, "I can't sleep all winter, I can't sleep all day."

But this proved my escape from the turmoil at home. I didn't have money to travel or stay in motels. The honey had tasted good. I would eat more. As I re-entered the kitchen, Papa Bear stood beside the counter.

"Who's been eating my honey?" he growled.

"I have," I confessed and my knees shook.

"Porridge, honey, chairs, beds; aren't you people ever satisfied?"

"Guess not, guess not," I stammered, thankful that I could agree with my giant host. I gazed at his shaggy hair, his teeth and claws. "I'll go and get more honey right now." I made a wild dash out the door.

"That's right, run, run, when you don't know what else to do. *Run*." Papa Bear shouted after me.

Run I did. I ran until I needed to stop for breath. I awakened. I still sat by the trunk of a tree and I started to cry. I wept for a long while. How miserable, how unhappy I felt. Dreams of becoming a recluse, or hibernating; tears, anger, scolding, punishments, walks. What

else was left to try?

A little breeze whispered through the colors about me. "Oh, God!" I cried, "I have failed. I should just stop trying and put you at the helm. The trees and grasses await your loving care. Help me to do the same."

Nothing changed. No angel sat beside me. No voice sounded through the woods. But I did start thinking. I remembered how I used to beg my mother to read about the three bears. In our backyard my playmates and I acted out the drama. I was always Goldilocks. Years later when my little girl came, of course, that would be her name.

Had I placed my daughter in a story book role and insisted that she play the part? In my solitude small voices sprang from behind barks and bushes. They danced under the sun towards me.

"And Goldilocks, what does she think of this?"

"Run, run, when you don't know what else to do. *Run*."

After being alone with nature and my dream, this running and hibernating did sound foolish. Maples, elms, and sky, so lasting and eternal, they encircled me. A mother should surround her daughter's life like this, I thought, with color, serenity, and lasting love.

Past episodes came to mind. I had preached too much, or kept too silent. Other times I did not listen or did not ask. True, the girl was young. She often went off track. I must accept this. I needed to give more love and understanding.

"Just be thankful that she's not into drugs or drinking," Amy had once told me.

"Who knows, that could be next." I had answered.

How negative I had been. But now, somehow I knew. My prayers would be answered.

Long shadows crept in front of me. I got to my feet. I must reach home before dark.

Ruth Lerdal Cummings lives in Maple Plain, Minnesota.

New Testament study

Life, death and resurrection in the New Testament

Walfried E. Goossen

HAMILTON, Ont. — An editor wanted "something exciting, something with zing, something that will make readers sit up and take notice." The theme of the seminar, "Life in the face of death: The resurrection message of the New Testament," hardly makes for light entertainment. But, the emphasis was on resurrection and hope.

WALFRIED E. GOOSSEN PHOTOS

Dr. Richard Longenecker, a key organizer and panelist for the seminar.

The most interesting aspect of the seminar was the presenters themselves. Not only were they expert in their field, they also believed the gospel message, something which cannot be taken for granted in modern theology. It was like a breath of fresh air. That, I thought was exciting in itself.

The scholars, each highly regarded in their area of religious studies, were invited from five countries by Dr. Richard Longenecker of McMaster Divinity School, who hosted the guests, presented a paper and took part in panel discussions. Longenecker is globally respected as an author, teacher and scholar and for his valuable service on the executive editorial board of the NIV Bible translation.

Life and death, and the hope of resurrection are not merely academic concepts obscured by long words and intellectualism. They were ironically lifted off the pages of learned papers into the life of the conference when it was announced on the morning of the second day that the father-in-law of Dr. Donald A. Hagner of Fuller Theological Seminary had died after a lengthy illness. Participants paused to mourn. Dying is a social phenomena not an isolated individual experience alone. It is a part of living. We continued our attempt to understand it all, knowing for whom the bell tolled.

Allen Martens, a McMaster Divinity College graduate and research assistant to Longenecker, read a paper submitted by Dr. William Lane of Seattle Pacific University. Dr. Lane was at home with terminal cancer. Again theory and experience came to participants as travelling companions.

Life beyond the river

Edwin Yamauchi of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, the first presenter, laid the groundwork for the seminar with a paper on "Death and after life in the Near East" (ancient Egypt, the Greco-Roman world, Second Temple Judaism and several others). This gave a developmental view of how the various cultures and historical periods dealt with death and related questions as humankind slowly progressed from superstition and idolatry to the Jewish monotheistic worship of Yahweh, which in turn gave birth to Jesus the Messiah and Christianity.

The tombs of the pharaohs dealt with death by denying it, Yamauchi reminded listeners. The dead were given provisions for the after life, such as clothing and food. Women were sacrificed and placed in the tombs of dead rulers to accompany them into the next life where their functions would be much the same as in terrestrial life. The dead crossed the river Styx in a small row boat and entered the Underworld, or Realm of Death, where their existence, it was believed, continued in a life after death. The Egyptians had no concept of resurrection but had an intuitive awareness that the dead will live again.

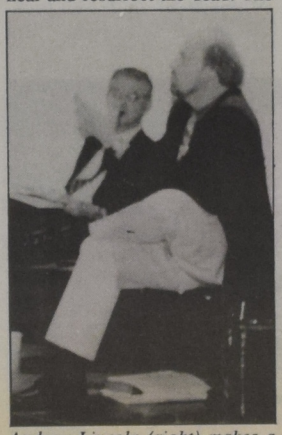
Out of this attempt to make sense out of life in view of death the ancients developed sophisticated mythologies and magic, says Yamauchi. Life expectancy in Egypt was only 40 years. Their intimation and hope of immortality is not surprising as they wrestled with the same questions we do.

The Epic of Gilgamesh from Babylon (1198 B.C. or earlier) centres on the demi-god Gilgamesh who was believed to be 2/3 divine and 1/3 human, Yamauchi continued. This seems to be an early speculation about a god who is human and divine and points, however obliquely, to Jesus. In the Persian concept of resurrection and a fiery trial, the purgatory of Catholic Christianity seems to be anticipated, although there is no direct link.

Concept of resurrection developed

In Second Temple Judaism there was at first no concept of resurrection, Yamauchi noted. But Isaiah had prophesied that, "The Lord All-Powerful will destroy the power of death and wipe away all tears," (Isa. 25:8). Daniel also received revelation about resurrection: "Many of those who lie dead in the ground will rise from the dead..." (Dan. 12:2).

By the time Jesus was born two major factions addressed the question, said Yamauchi. The Sadducees denied resurrection, while the Pharisees believed in it. The Dead Sea scrolls make a reference to a Messiah who will heal and resurrect the dead. The debate raged among Jews. The thousands of years of myth and groping in the dark was beginning to find enlightenment among the chosen people of God who, unlike other cultures and religious groups, depended on God for an after life, while the ancients relied on magic practised by the dead, which they felt was a means of attaining a good after-life.



Andrew Lincoln (right) makes a point as Edwin Yamauchi looks on.

After Jesus' resurrection and in his teachings, an understanding of resurrection and the resurrection body was further developed, Yamauchi continued. The gospel teachings were not cut-and-dried static concepts. With God's leading, his people developed an ever increasing awareness of what life and resurrection in the face of death are about. The Apostle Paul played a major role in this, as the Pauline letters indicate and his teachings became a part of the New Testament canon.

Jesus' resurrection teachings were extremely controversial, as were his claims about himself, asserted Yamauchi. He said he came to fulfil the law, not to abolish it, and demonstrated to Israel how far from understanding the law they were. His teachings seemed new and a great threat to Judaism. His resurrection turned the world, Judaism included, on its head.

It is written

The seminar as a unified whole told a continuing story of the hand of humankind long reaching out in search of the extended hand of the Creator, however awkwardly.

Do such seminars mean anything to the average church-goer or are they the somewhat esoteric, irrelevant, "insider" speculations of the church intelligentsia.

Rev. Gerhard Visscher, the pastor of Burlington's Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church, put it into a pragmatic perspective. "As pastors and preachers of the Word of God we have to have an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. Not a simplistic one, but a knowledge of what is happening in the various passages of Scripture, and a conference like this one helps you do that." He points out that "some of this you aren't going to use in the pulpit, but it belongs in the category of the 'kitchen work' you do before you present a meal on the table."

Dr. Nicholas Gootjes of the Theological School of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton felt the conference was primarily for theologians, but agreed the ideas discussed would filter down to the church. The centrality of the resurrection in the Bible, a major focal point of this conference, is vital, as is the confirmation of scriptural authority in the current climate of doubt and unbelief. "Jesus always proclaimed, 'It is written,' placing complete trust in the reliability of Scripture," he said.

Organizers of the annual conference on the New Testament are also sensitive to the need to reach the lay population in the church. The papers presented will be published in a book early this summer by Eerdmans in a non-academic style.

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Towards a healthy way of grieving

JACOBA BOS PHOTOS

Conference participants continued their discussions inside and out.

Jacoba Bos

In this life we can be certain of one thing: unless the Lord returns in our lifetimes, we will all die; and we will experience grief as we lose loved ones. Grief is universal. How we mourn is affected by what we believe, the culture of the land we live in, and by traditions formed in our lifetimes.

Even though death and bereavement are not very popular topics, the subjects have given rise to books and studies which try to equip helpers who reach out to those in pain and assist them through a healthy grieving process so that healing can take place. For this reason the King's College in London, Ont., held its 15th annual international conference on death and bereavement. This event drew Hindus and Christians, blacks, Native Americans and Canadians to London, Ont., for an intensive three days of sharing and learning about delivering care in a multicultural setting.

The 500 conferees learned from speakers and workshops and were encouraged by "networking" with other committed caregivers such as doctors, nurses, pastors, social workers, funeral directors, police officers and volunteers.

How young people relate to death was the topic of a panel discussion which brought together five professionals from different parts of the world and from different cultural backgrounds. This discussion generated a helpful and at times emotional exchange of ideas.

Death-denying culture

"We in North America live in a death-denying culture," said Dr. R. Stevenson, from New Jersey, where he is a death education consultant. He went on to explain that we'd rather hide death, especially from children, pretending that children have no grief, while it's a proven fact that even children who are too young to understand do feel grief and emotional pain. It is, therefore, a good idea to include them in the funeral rituals. An older child could write a eulogy about why he or she loved Grandpa and what made him special. A young child could express his or her feelings with drawings and paintings.

High mortality rates

Families in India expect to lose children, explained Dr. Laungani, a psychology professor in that country. Infant mortality is high and medical services are not always available to the predominantly rural population which lives in small homes in remote villages. To compensate for these inevitable losses, women in India may marry young and give birth many times. When death strikes, the family unit, along with grandparents who customarily live with the oldest son and his family, are there to share in the mourning and support the family on the road to healing.

"Colombia has been grieving for the last century," said Dr. Patricia Tovar, an anthropologist. She told the audience that very few people die of old age in her native country, where drug violence is a regular occurrence and childhood malnutrition is taking its toll.

A child's will

Children in Colombia are constantly exposed to death, and youths as young as 12 are actually hired by criminals to kill on command. The people's belief that an angel has reached heaven, releasing the child of a lifetime of suffering, gives the family reason to carry on and even celebrate death.

Sister Margaret Noone spoke in a gentle Australian accent about her work as manager of a hospice for children in her country.

"Do help a dying child with making a will," she said. "So he'll know that his favorite teddy bear and toys will go to someone who loved him." She also said that often children feel responsible for what happens in their family. It is, therefore, important that parents are open about situations and relationships, and share their feelings with their children.

"To honestly say, 'I don't know why this happens' can sometimes be all that's needed, since listening and allowing their son or daughter to vent their anger and pain is of primary importance."

No right way to grieve

Dr. Laungani, representing the Hindu culture, also cautioned about the risk of allowing strong cultural groups to impose their values on minority groups. As an example he shared an experience he had in England, where his friend from India, living temporarily in England, lost his young wife in a tragic car accident. When this devastated friend stood by his wife's coffin, weeping uncontrollably, an English friend pulled him aside and said sternly, "Men don't cry."

"There is no right or wrong in grieving," were the words of a bereaved parent. "Death is something you're never prepared for," she went on to say. "What we can do is take more control over how things are done. We should empower our own group and educate those in the marketplace," she told the hushed audience.

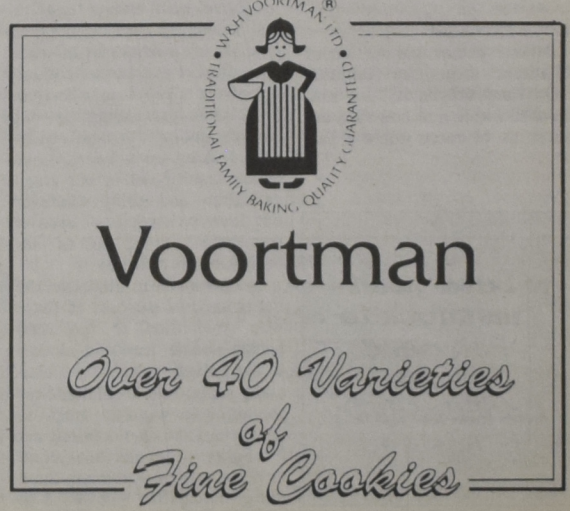
Father Andrew Greeley, well-known author and Roman Catholic theologian, was the keynote speaker.

She then told her personal story of how she and her husband were involved in every possible detail of their daughter's funeral, even down to shovelling the dirt for the grave. "The profit margin in the marketplace is not more important than ministering to the bereaved and caring for the dead," were her astute remarks which were received with appreciative applause.

"Bring a meal to a bereaved family," was the practical advice of a widower with school-aged children. "Offer to take them to ball games and music lessons," he continued, pointing out the importance of supporting the grieving family after the flowers have wilted and sympathy cards have been put away.

There was lots of food for thought at this conference. There were hugs and handshakes aplenty, and words of comfort and cheer. But the Word was absent. I found that rather sad. For our greatest comfort in grief is that we mourn but not like those who have no hope.

Jacoba Bos is a volunteer for the VON Palliative Care Volunteer Program in Strathroy, Ont.



Feature

Helping the 'least of these'

A death-row inmate looks at the love command

Michael B. Ross

"I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me" (Matt. 25:45, Today's English Version)

The "least important ones." I understand this concept very well. As a condemned man living on death row, I am considered the worst of the worst and the lowest of the low. I have been judged by society as not being worthy of life itself. So here I sit, in this eight-by-ten foot cell, waiting for my appointment with execution. Without a doubt, I qualify as one of the "least important ones."

I wasn't always one of the "least important ones." I grew up on a poultry farm in rural Connecticut. Twenty years ago, I was a high school senior in the top five per cent of my class academically. I was a young man with a seemingly bright future, bound for Cornell University — a top-notch Ivy League school — from which I would later graduate with a bachelor's degree.

At the time, I felt on top of the world. Little did I know how far I was about to fall. Ironically, it was this fall from one of the potential "great ones," to the very least of the "least important ones," that I think gives me a unique perspective on this section of Matthew.

Love them all

I believe that this section of Matthew, sometimes subtitled "The Final Judgment," is a concrete illustration of how God expects us to carry out the two great commandments upon which all of his laws are based, and upon which God expects us to base our very lives: "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37,39).

"You shall love your neighbor." This is not always easy. In fact, it is at times downright difficult. But to love God, you *must* love your neighbor, for in loving your neighbor you are, in fact, loving God. And just as importantly, by *not* loving your neighbor, you are *not* loving God.

God doesn't tell us to love only *some* of our neighbors, but to love our neighbors. Period. We are not to set conditions for our love. We are not to determine who is worthy or deserving of our love. We are to *love.* period.

Is it enough?

So what exactly does loving one's neighbor entail? Jesus attempts to explain this to us in Matthew by teaching us what the church sums up as the corporal works of mercy. There are seven: to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to visit the imprisoned; to shelter the homeless; to visit the sick; and to bury the dead.

That is the letter of God's law, but do we understand its true meaning? To feed the hungry. Is it enough to bring a few cans of food to toss into the donation bin on Sunday to support the local food bank? Arguably, that would be following the letter of God's law.

But God expects more from us. Love isn't always easy or convenient. In fact, sometimes love means a whole lot of work and effort. Love means coming out of our nice, clean, suburban neighborhoods, rolling up our sleeves, getting our hands dirty, and working up a sweat. Love means coming out of our grand cathedrals and going wherever our love is needed — even if that means going to an undesirable part of town.

I don't mean to minimize the importance of the acts of those who give food to the food banks, donate their old clothes to the Salvation Army or financially support the local homeless shelter. I in no way mean to belittle anyone who does any act of charity, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. Such things count. But I *do* mean to challenge those of you who have the opportunity and means to do more.

Use of time

There are some of you who have great responsibilities and little free time. Two working parents with four small children will probably not have much time or energy for charity outside the home. Such individuals should not feel guilty about this — they are doing God's work within their own family. However, these same people in 10 or 15 years, when the children are grown, may have a great deal of free time and energy to devote to the "least important ones." And it is from such people that God expects more.

Consider how you will be judged if you could volunteer to work 10 hours a week at your local soup kitchen, but instead choose simply to donate a few cans of food to the donation bin at the back of the church last Sunday.

Consider how you will be judged if you could volunteer one weekend a month on a local Habitat for Humanity project, but instead choose simply to donate a few dollars to the local homeless shelter at their yearly fund drive.

Consider how you will be judged if you could work with the needy at your local homeless shelter, but instead simply choose to donate some old clothes to the Salvation Army after spring cleaning.

How do we know what God wants from us? How do we know whether we are doing enough? You have to follow what some spiritual advisors call "the process of discerning God's will." As Father Daniel Lowery wrote: "This means that you calmly and prayerfully examine your life — your present responsibilities and commitments, your talents, your health, your free time — in relationship to the concrete demands that a more active role in the church would place upon you."

It takes reflection

This process isn't always easy and often takes great reflection and much prayer. Often it is quite helpful to talk to a wise friend or a spiritual advisor. Try making a list of what time you have to donate and what personal activities you would be giving up. If one of you women were to give one evening a week to work at a local battered women's shelter, what activity would you have to sacrifice? Just how important is this other activity to you? And which do you believe is more important?

You don't know what to do? Your church can undoubtedly suggest where your help is needed. Maybe you could work one night a week on a suicide hotline. Maybe you could work a couple nights a week tutoring adults. Maybe you could work one afternoon a weekend at your local AIDS hospice. Maybe you could spare one day a month to visit a state prison inmate who would otherwise get no visits.

COURTESY DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK

"To feed the hungry. Is it enough to just bring a few cans of food to toss into the donation bin on Sunday to support the local food bank? God expects more from us. Love isn't always convenient."

There is plenty to do. It might be a project that is quite limited as far as time and energy is concerned, or it might be a project that is quite extensive. You have to tailor it to your life and talents. There are many "least important ones" out there, in all forms and guises, that need our help. That need *your* help.

So before you decide that you don't have the time or the energy, or that you don't know a "deserving" person, think again about Jesus' words: "I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me."

Michael Ross has been on Connecticut's death row since June 1987. He is currently under a stay of execution pending the resolution of the appeals process. But he believes it's likely he'll be executed before the year 2000.

Send your questions to Peter and Marja. Confidentiality is assured.

Church press quotes

Rev. Jacob Kuntz

Fatherhood

Father's Day was for **The Catholic Register** *(June 9) reason to emphasize the role of fathers in our homes and society. The arrival of "technologies that have replaced man's traditional role as partner in procreation" damages the institution of fatherhood,* **The Register** *said. But fathers are important:*

"Through the decline of marriage, radical feminist antipathy towards patriarchy and the growth of an over-indulgent individualism that exalts freedom at the expense of responsibility, society has become a hostile place for today's father.

"The decline of fatherhood has horrific ramifications for children. Yet in American society, by the year 2000 nearly half of all children will go to bed without being able to say goodnight to their dads. Canada isn't all that far behind. The heroic efforts required of many single parents and divorced or separated parents to raise their children to become upright and emotionally healthy adults show how difficult the task is. It is a job for two parents.

"More specifically, it is a job for a mother and a father, a woman and man. There is increasing sociological research to show that, despite the many talents of women for nurturing and supporting their children and their ability to take on many of the roles once the preserve of dad, they cannot completely replace a father's touch.

"This is not an argument for the return of "Father Knows Best.' Today's dad has to be more flexible, nurturing and willing to take on a greater share of the duties of running a home. He is no longer the only breadwinner. And thank God for all that. Largely because of feminism, the late-20th century couple and children can develop a far richer, deeper family life than ever before.

"But father is still a necessary spiritual, emotional and physical counterpart to mother in one of the most important jobs anyone can have — raising children. Just as Mary and Jesus needed the quiet strength and love of Joseph, so today's children need their dads."

Our divided country

The **Mennonite Reporter,** *June 9 devoted an editorial to the June election results. "Five solitudes" have emerged: the West, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada. The two solitudes of the past, francophones and anglophones, have been replaced. In our divided country the church should work for national reconciliation.*

"How many solitudes does it take for the parts no longer to constitute a whole? On the one hand, the embracing of regionalism and factionalism is reaching ridiculous proportions. On the other hand, the national self-portrait drawn by the 1997 election may be a more complete and accurate picture than what we usually draw.

"The fact is, we have some distinct regional grievances and insights in this country. And if we want to continue being a country, these different voices all need to be part of the conversation which holds us together and keeps us working for the greatest common good.

"Although some of our political parties still claim to represent the interests of the entire country, those claims are becoming less credible....

"What does this all mean for the church? The church will need to decide whether it simply wants to mirror the national mood, or whether it wants to counter actively the centrifugal forces at work in the church and in the country. Further, the church faces the opportunity to participate in the work of national reconciliation.

"'Shall we whine together?' asked Wally Kroeker in the May/June issue of 'The Marketplace,' published by Mennonite Economic Development Associates. He examined a comment he had heard from someone who observed that 'business people are whiners. They whine about how the church doesn't appreciate them....'

"Kroeker lists others who have expressed a similar complaint: academics, school teachers, journalists, artists, healthcare workers, civil servants and others. 'Maybe we should just complain together: 'We are all underappreciated....' Here's a thought: Maybe we should all take a step in the shoes of another and see if it rubs off on the church (On second thought: aren't WE the church?)

"Applying this attitude to our church and civic life would be a good start for the bridge-building challenges ahead."

Government and gambling

A front-page story in the June **United Church Observer,** *by Heather Gardam, mentions the long lineups in drugstores — of people anxious to buy lottery tickets. Why is the government so deeply involved in gambling and why is gambling promoted so vigorously?*

"How does a lineup for lottery tickets relate to our country's finances? I wouldn't, at one time, have seen the connection. But lately, various elected officials, with their enthusiasm for casinos and gaming projects generally, have been pulling the two together in my mind. What percentage of disposable income is the cost of a lottery ticket, an evening at the casino? Ironic that the very people who most need that glimmer of hope are the ones who can least afford it. Ironic perhaps, but the whole system depends on that fact....

"The closer to the edge we are, the more desperately we reach for the small chance, the spin of the wheel ... that might propel one of us up into the comfortable ranks of winners.

"For a few days or a few minutes that possibility brings vitality, excitement to our lives. It's a marvellous distraction — from constructive criticism of our governments, from creative sanctions in our private lives.

"We forget that our win could only be at the expense of our fellows, that the whole process is profoundly antithetical to the ideal of co-operative enterprise, the notion that we all could be winners if we worked together.

"Now I understand why the involvement of governments in gambling makes me so uncomfortable: in a subtle way it pits citizen against citizen, everyone for herself. It seems like ... an endorsement, of the principle of 'winners, watchers and losers' as fundamental and necessary to our economy.

"There would be no gambling game if the few winners were not supported by the multitude of losers. Just as there can be no market economy without the implicit understanding that a certain percentage of the population must fall victim to the system. Do the big corporations bemoan unemployment? Of course not. Unemployment is good for the profit margin ....

"I have always believed that equal opportunity and a reliable social safety net were an important part of the Canadian ideal. A look at the increased flow of wealth to the wealthy, thanks to government cutbacks, doesn't seem to support that idea. At the same time, I see our governments cynically exploiting the fact that we can be counted on, when we get desperate enough, to stand in these 'loser lines,' seduced by the forlorn hope that we might become one of ... the winners.

"We can be coaxed to turn our backs on those whose lives are destroyed by the gambling game, by the offer to allot a percentage of the profits to try to put their pieces back together again. After all, you can't have winners without losers.

"We do still have a maple leaf on our flag, don't we? Or is it a dollar sign?"

Where Christian schools come in

John Congram (now moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada) wrote in the June issue of the **Presbyterian Record** *in connection with the new discoveries about the planet Mars. Is there life on Mars? How should Reformed people discuss the issues related to this question? What is the connection between Christian faith and science?*

"Theoretically, Reformed/Presbyterian theology should offer support and freedom to engage in serious discussion of these issues. It emphasizes God's sovereignty. God created everything through the Word. God, we claim, is the source of all truth. Therefore, any truth, scientific or religious, has its source in God. Such a theology should allow us to face, with courage and openness, whatever truth may be uncovered.

"But theology and practice do not always mesh. Too many of us, Presbyterians included, view religion and science as separate and, sometimes, competing spheres of activity. Even when we greet new scientific discoveries with joy, we seldom reflect upon their theological significance.

"In the end, the story of science and religion must be one story. God is not a religious specialist uninterested in politics and science.

"The Christian Reformed Church exhibits a passion to build its own Christian schools in an attempt to bring all disciplines under God's sovereignty in a way the present public school system seldom affords. We cannot fail to affirm and admire this philosophy, even when we cannot always support the practical steps to implement it.

"We can expect many more Dolly and life-on-Mars stories.... We do not honor God by becoming defensive or withdrawing into the clichés of the past. These events become the means by which God calls Christians to study and explore how faith and science interact, and to witness to the one story and to the one God behind all things."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont., where he works part-time as chaplain in Holland Christian Homes.

Classifieds

Classified Rates

(Revised February 1, 1995)

Births	$25.00
Marriages & Engagements	$40.00
Anniversaries	$45.00
2-column anniversaries	$90.00
Obituaries	$45.00
Notes of thanks	$35.00
Birthdays	$40.00

All other one-column classified advertisements: $15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is $15.00. Letter under file number $35.00 extra. Photos: $25.00 additional charge.

Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

ATTENTION!

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
Fax: (905) 682-8313

Please take advantage of our monthly Business Directory. For the low cost of $25 you can advertise your business.

Marriages

RUMPH/SPOELSTRA:

Mr. and Mrs. Hilbert and Diny Rumph are pleased to announce the upcoming wedding of their son

ARNOLD JOHN
to
TERESA

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Alice Spoelstra of R.R. 1, Palmerston, Ont.

The celebration of this special event will take place, the Lord willing, on Saturday, Aug. 16, 1997, at two o'clock in the afternoon in the Drayton Chr. Ref. Church, Drayton, Ont., Rev. John Heeg officiating.

Address: 15 Bonniewood Drive, Drayton, ON N0G 1P0

HERREWYNEN-HOUTSMA:

Congratulations to Wende and Brian on their marriage!

Jack and Gert Herrewynen of Burlington, Ont., are pleased to announce the recent marriage of their daughter

WENDE N. HERREWYNEN
to
BRIAN S. HOUTSMA

on July 5, 1997, in New Street Chr. Ref. Church, Rev. Peter C. Hogeterp officiating.

The bride is a recent graduate of Calvin College and will begin her career as a nurse at Mercy Hospital in Muskegon, Mich.

Brian is also a graduate of Calvin College and is employed by Ameribank in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The newlyweds will reside at: 950 Lancashire Ct., SE., Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Anniversaries

1947 July 31 1997

We praise God and give thanks for the 50th anniversary celebration of our Mom and Dad

ALBERT and GRACE REINSMA

Anna & John Feddes — Edmonton, Alta.
Eric, Mark, Jeanette
Theresa & Hardy Roch — Edmonton, Alta.
Jerrod, Chad (Colleen), Steven, Stephanie
Hilda & Melvin Elzinga — Peers, Alta.
Douglas, Cheryl (Gerald) Robert, Wayne
Alice & Terry VandeKraats — Millet, Alta.
Charlene, Kerry Anne, Joshua, Jordan
David & Bertha Reinsma — Edmonton, Alta.
Curtis (Carrie), Angela, Jennifer, Karen
Great-grandchildren Melissa, Barry, Mitchell

Great is Your Faithfulness.

Address: 4720-10th Ave. Edson, AB T7E 1E4

1957 July 27 1997

"This God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death" (Ps. 48:14).

With joy and love and thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness, we announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and Pake and Beppe

FRANK and JANE ROORDA
(nee SPAN)

We thank you Mom and Dad for your wise guidance, generous love and frequent prayers. We cherish the Christian upbringing you gave us and your continued loving presence in our life.

Jake & Sally Roorda
Cheryl, Rachelle, Steven, Jessica
Rob & Elaine Roorda
Carla
Anita & Ron Hoekstra
Kari, Fraser, Kevin, Dana, Joel
Mark & Milly Roorda
Danielle, Joshua
Darren & Beverly Roorda
Bethany, Emma

Home address: 14 Tall Pines Trail, Holland Landing, ON L9N 1J5

Personal

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Christian companion magazine.
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Single issue $5.
Write to:
#12 923 2nd Ave. S.
Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7

Anniversaries

1947 August 14 1997

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we joyfully announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

GEORGE and ALICE PASMA
(nee STELPSTRA)

Congratulations Dad and Mom, Pake and Beppe.
With much love from your family.

John & Grace Pasma — Edmonton, Alta.
Rachel, Jeremy, Gregory, Timothy
Jake & Marjorie Pasma — Mossley, Ont.
Chris, Mike, Derek, Laurie, Kevin
Joanne & Bill Den Harder — Aylmer, Ont.
Allison, Mark, Teri-Lyn, Jenna, Koralee
Keith & Judy Pasma — Thamesford, Ont.
Sarah, Shannon, Andrea
Ben & Lynda Pasma — St. Thomas, Ont.
Matthew, Cheryl, Lindsey, Phillip
Marg & Wilf Greidanus — London, Ont.
Kurtis, Trevor, Spencer
Tim & Joanne Pasma — London, Ont.
Christopher, Robert, Daniel, Lauren

We wish to invite family and friends to an open house, to be held, D.V., on Saturday, Aug. 16, 1997, from 2-4 p.m., in the Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, 716 Classic Drive, London, Ont.

Best wishes only.

Home address: 263 Clarke Rd., London, ON N5W 5E7

Wyoming, Ont. Kitchener, Ont.

1957 August 2 1997

Unless the Lord build the house, its builders labor in vain.

With love and thanks to God, we announce our parents' and Pake and Beppe's 40th wedding anniversary

LEO and JANE VEENSTRA
(nee DE VRIES)

Sally & Jake Roorda — Kitchener, Ont.
Cheryl, Rachelle, Steven, Jessica
Jane & John Huizinga — Mount Hope, Ont.
Bart, Paul, Calvin, Danny
David & Christine Veenstra — Sardis, B.C.
Megan, Shane
Brenda & Jeff van Dijk — Kitchener, Ont.
Sarah, Jeremy

Home address: 222 Old Country Place, Kitchener, ON N2E 3A4

Interested in placing an ad? Get in touch with us for details.

Anniversaries

Staphorst Chatham
the Neth. Ont.

1942 August 1 1997

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, who has kept them in His care, we joyfully announce the 55th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

HENRY and ALICE ZANTINGH

Jack & Stefke Zantingh
Steffie & Tony Bodini
Bert & Corrine Zantingh
Hans & Brenda Zantingh
Johanne & Pat Desaulnier
Jennie (deceased 1990) & Jack Dekker
Mike & Deeny Zantingh
Clarence & Laura Zantingh
Petra Biesheuvel
Fred & Liz Zantingh
Anita & Bert Vanderheide

36 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

1957 July 27 1997

We are very happy and thankful to the Lord that, D.V., we may, with family and friends, celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents

JIM and BETTY BANDSTRA
(nee KUIPERS)

Francine Bandstra (deceased)
Mark & Sylvia Bandstra — Orillia
Matthew, Stephanie, Sarah
Sue & John Bishop — Bowmanville

Home address: 1 Hobbs Drive, Bowmanville, ON L1C 3R8

1957 August 2 1997

With thanksgiving to God, we hope to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

GERRIT and TRIENTJE KLINGENBERG
(nee KONING)

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you in His loving care.
With love and best wishes from your family.

Jacoba Koning — Gorrie, Ont.
George & Maureen — Lacombe, Alta.
Becky, Jamie, Michael
Roger & Carol-Anne — Gorrie, Ont.
Matthew, Richard, Nathan, Bethany
Jacqueline & John — Wroxeter, Ont.
Charlene, Eric, David, Tara, Stephanie
Bernard & Renee — Hinkley, Calif.
Brandon, Amanda
David & Veronica — Woodstock, Ont.
Stephen, Brian, Darrell, Jarrett
Brenda & Leroy — Gorrie, Ont.
Jason, Karl
Ronald & Julie — Clifford, Ont.
Calvin

Address: R.R. #1, Gorrie, ON N0G 1X0

Classifieds

Obituaries

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).
The Lord God called to His heavenly home His child

BENJAMIN (BEN) MALDA

on July 2, 1997, in his 72nd year.
Beloved husband and partner for 42 years of Jane Malda (nee Visscher).
Loving father and Opa of:
Jim & Ruth Malda — Alberta
Benjamin, James, Rachel
Judy Malda De Vries — Michigan
Dylan
Marianne & Mark Henderson — Kitchener
Alex, Brandon, Corey
Predeceased by his parents Bindert and Uilkje Malda of Friesland, the Neth., two sisters and four brothers.
Survived by one sister, Alice Oosterbaan, and three brothers, Jan (Clara), Gerben (Ann), Earl (Hilda) Malda.
Fondly remembered by sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law and many nieces and nephews.
Ben farmed for 27 years in Turnberry Township and upon retirement moved to the Kitchener-Waterloo area. He was a member of Community Chr. Ref. Church and a former member of Lucknow Chr. Ref. Church. He devoted many hours in ministry to the church family and to the communities in which he lived. His unselfish service will be missed by many who counted him their good neighbor and friend.
Funeral service was held on Saturday, July 5, at Community Chr. Ref. Church, 1275 Bleams Road, in Kitchener. Interment was at Williamsburg Cemetery, Kitchener, Ont.
As a family we will so sorely miss him. His love for Christ, his example of living a life of thankfulness and prayer, we count as a precious legacy.
We also wish to thank everyone for their many prayers and loving support by words and deeds of kindness before and during Ben's struggle with cancer.
Correspondence address: Jane Malda, 21 Century Hill Dr., Kitchener, ON N2E 2E3

Teachers

HAMILTON, Ont.: Due to a recent increase in enrolment, **Calvin Chr. School** may have a **possible full-time or part-time teacher opening** at the **Grade seven and eight level.** Christian teachers seeking such a position must have their resumes at the school office by August 6, attention, Mr. T. Postma. Send resume to:

Calvin Chr. School
547 West 5th Street
Hamilton, ON L9C 3P7
(905) 388-2645

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Miscellaneous

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Please call (905)892-5032.

Obituaries

Our brother and brother-in-law
KLAAS DE VRIES
finished his earthly journey on June 2, 1997, at the age of 77 years. His simple and faithful life, together with his humorous personality made him dear to us.
Emkje Jonkman-De Vries — the Netherlands
Thymen & Sipkje Krikke-De Vries — Ohio, USA
Sipke & Gerda De Vries — the Netherlands
Anne & Aukje De Vries — the Netherlands
Ted & Audrey Soepboer-De Vries — Forest, Ont.
Correspondence address:
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Soepboer, R.R.#5, 4377 Douglas Line, Forest, ON N0N 1J0

Hoogeveen, the Neth. — Hagersville, Ont.
May 17, 1923 - July 4, 1997
Safe in the arms of Jesus.
After courageously battling cancer for nearly 18 years

ROELIE MOES
(nee BENNINK)

went home to be with her Lord.
She will be lovingly remembered and sadly missed by her husband, John Moes, and her children and grandchildren.
Rita & Peter Kloet — Simcoe, Ont.
Andrea, Derek, Kevin, Nate
Fred Moes — Hagersville, Ont.
Cheryl, Trevor, Jessica
Alice & Eric Voogt — Langley, B.C.
Sean, Joleen, Alisha, Leanne, Erica
Betty & Rick Meyer — Abbotsford, B.C.
Jennifer, David, Jonathan, Daniel
Correspondence address: 41 Alma Street, Hagersville, ON N0A 1H0

Job Opportunities

Wanted:
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Junior contract position with 3-year community college diploma and MacIntosh literacy required.
AMSTIER COMMUNICATIONS
Fax resume to: 905-821-1158

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Call extended:
— Maranatha, Bowmanville, Ont., **Candidate Mike Miedema.**

Miscellaneous

What if one day you couldn't next week Speak?

Or maybe you couldn't walk. Or your vision was blurred. That's what it's like to live with multiple sclerosis, an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system. Things you take for granted can become impossible and you don't know when or where or if it will strike again. But the research and services programs of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada are providing some answers. With your help, we can connect with a cure. **1-800-268-7582**

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

Miscellaneous

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Are there any others who would like to follow the example shown by this unnamed donor? If so, please contact Stan de Jong at (905) 682-8311.

Classifieds

Events	Miscellaneous

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

July 26 "Waterman" 50th anniversary reunion, 10 a.m., Pinehurst Lake Conservation area, White Oaks West Picnic Area, Hwy. 24A, north of **Paris**, Ont. Info.: Alida (519) 537-7365 or Jackie (519) 537-3469 (#)

To Aug. 1 Summer school at Wycliffe College and the ICS, **Toronto**, Ont. For brochure and registration details contact Chris Barrigar at (416) 979-2870, fax (416) 979-5668 or e-mail: c.barrigar@utoronto.ca. (#)

Aug. 17 Dutch worship service led by Rev. P. Van Egmond, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

FROM COAST TO COAST

ENGLISH RADIO:

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Duncan - CKAY 10:00am 1500
Burns Lake-CFLD 9:15am 1400
Kitimat-CKTK 8:30am 1230
Osoyoos-CJOR 8:00am 1490
Penticton-CKOR 8:00am 800
Port Alberni-CJAV 7:00pm 1240
Prince George-CIRX ... 7:00am 94.3
Princeton-CHOR 8:00am 1400
Smithers-CFBV 9:15am 1230
Summerland-CHOR 8:00am 1450
Vernon-CJIB 9:30pm 940

QUEBEC

Montreal - CIQC 7:30am 600

ALBERTA

Brooks-CIBQ 8:00am 1340
Ft. McMurray-CJOK 8:30am 1230
High River-CHRB 6:30pm 1280
Edmonton - CKER 11:00pm 101.9

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan-CJSL 8:00am 1280
Weyburn-CFSL 8:00am 1190

MANITOBA

Altona-CFAM 9:30am 950
Steinbach-CHSM 9:30am 1250
Winnipeg-CKJS 9:15am 810

ONTARIO

Atikokan-CFAK 9:30am 1240
Chatham-CFCO 6:30am 630
Fort Frances-CFOB 9:30am 640
Guelph - CJOY 8:30am 1460
Hamilton-CHAM 7:30am 1280
Kapuskasing-CKAP 9:00am 580
Kingston-WLKC 7:30am 100.7
Newmarket- CKDX 9:30am 88.5
Oshawa-CKAR 8:00am 1350
Owen Sound-CFOS 10:30am 560
Pembroke-CHVR 10:00am 96.7
St.Catharines-CKTB 7:30pm 610
Sarnia-CHOK 7:30am 1070
Stratford-CJCS 8:45am 1240
Windsor-CKLW 8:30am 580
Wingham-CKNX 10:30am 920
Woodstock-CKDK (fm) ... 8:00am 102.3

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John-CHSJ 9:30am 700

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown-CFCY ... 7:00am 630

NOVA SCOTIA

Digby-CKDY 6:00am 1420
Kentville-CKEN 8:30am 1490
Middleton-CKAD 8:30am 1350
New Glasgow-CKEC ... 7:30am 1320
Sydney-CJCB 8:00am 1270
Weymouth-CKDY 8:30am 103.1
Windsor-CFAB 8:30am 1450

TELEVISION:

Faith 20-TV
(Monday to Friday)

Check your local listings for cable outlets airing *Faith 20.*

Alberta - Lethbridge - CJIL
.....Thursday - 9:00pm
.....Saturday - 12:00noon

Vision-TV
(every Saturday)

British Columbia ..... 7:00&10:00pm
Alberta ..... 8:00 & 11:00pm
Sask. & Manitoba..... 6:00 & 9:00pm
Ontario & Quebec..... 7:00 & 10:00pm
Nfld., N.B., N.S. & P.E.I. . 8:00 & 11:00pm

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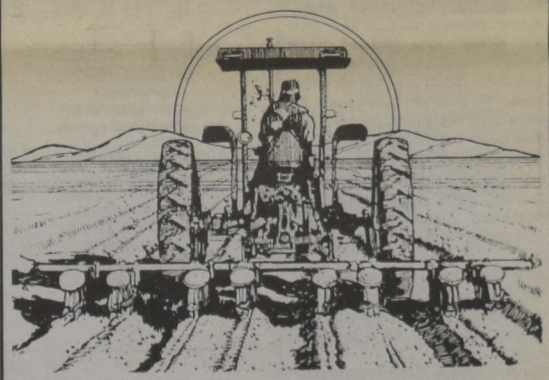

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Classifieds

Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

Until a few months ago, kidney dialysis was her only chance. But then a kidney donor was found. Discuss organ donation with your family and sign a donor card today. If enough people do, we can give others like Michelle a second chance.

THE KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF CANADA

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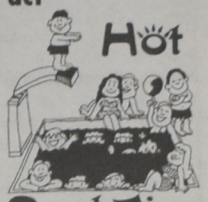

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Students let their stuffed animals do the traveling

Bert Witvoet

STRATFORD, Ont. — His name is Teddy and he wears a blue knapsack on his back. A red checkered ribbon completes his wardrobe as he travels the length and breadth of the North American continent.

But his journeys will end before November 1 this year, because that's when his owner, Brittany O'Hearn, wants to see him back in her classroom, along with all the other stuffed animals that have been traveling for the past six months.

So far, Teddy has seen the falls in Paris, Ont., when Amanda Smith went there. He experienced sunny, hot weather in Florida with Mary Goward. With Brittany herself he went to the movie "That Darn Cat." He went to Florida a second time with Hilda DeVries, in April and saw a festival parade in St. Petersburg.

Teddy went along with Ed Witvoet on his drive through Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana and Alberta. Ed found that Teddy kept him awake at night as he drove the long hours to the west. Ed's mom, Alice, took Teddy on the bus from Calgary to Vancouver, a trip he really enjoyed.

Teddy is part of the "Travelmates" project of Grades 4/5 at

BERT WITVOET

Stratford and District Christian School that began when teacher Lykke Van Drunen brought a few stuffed animals into her classroom. They were sent to her by her brother-in-law who is himself a teacher in Orangeville, Ont., and was trying to get a project going with his students.

The idea, which has been around for a few years, according to Van Drunen, is to ask someone to take a stuffed animal along on his or her journey, and to write information in a "passport" that the animal carries in a knapsack. After the journey has been completed, the animal can be passed on to another travelmate, who will do the same. It is hoped that all animals will be back in the Stratford classroom before November 1 this year.

VanDrunen had hoped to start the project in September this year so that the 23 stuffed animals (her own bear has joined the 22 animals sent out by the students) could travel for a whole school year. But the students were so excited to start their own project that she shot the starting pistol last March.

Ambassadors of the Lord

"It was very important to give the project a Christian emphasis," says VanDrunen. Students have added words of introduction which tell of their love for the Lord. She led the class in prayer in asking God to bless the project, so that the animals and their passports could be used to the Lord's glory and so that perhaps someone may be nudged into faith.

Another purpose is explained on page two of the passport in a note to fellow travelmates: "My class wants to learn about different communities and countries.... We are going to track and record on our class maps and bulletin boards information about each place that our toy friends visit.... We want to learn more about our world."

Van Drunen told her pupils not to bring an animal they especially love because she expected one or two of the animals might get lost.

With three months behind them, students have already experienced unexpected surprises. They have received mail on a weekly basis. People have sent the students flags and cards and other souvenirs.

Beyond expectations

Students have heard that Amanda's bear has been to Arizona, and that a certain Bert Tiemens, who carried the bear on top of his backpack, found that the bear became a great conversation piece. Pictures were taken of the bear in the Grand Canyon and at other sites along the route, and upon his return Tiemens visited the school to meet Amanda on what turned out to be her birthday.

One woman from the Netherlands who teaches special-needs kids there and who visited the Stratford school, was asked by a usually shy student if she would take the girl's bear along to the Netherlands. The woman agreed and introduced the bear to her own students, who in turn wrote letters in Dutch to the owner.

Other animals have already been to Mexico, England, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and many parts of Canada and the U.S. Several have gone to schools in far-away places, which has resulted in penpals for their owners.

One man took a stuffed animal along on his business trips and found that it allowed him to talk about his family and his faith in God. This is exactly the kind of result Van Drunen has been praying for. "We are being tremendously blessed," she says. "And the project allows us to bring the world into our classroom."

In the meantime, Brittany O'Hearn's Teddy is going camping at Presqu'ile Provincial Park near Trenton, Ont., with the Eric and Carolyn Groot-Nibbelink family.

But the highlight is coming in September when he hopes to travel across the ocean to the Netherlands to attend a wedding of the brother of Ingrid Torn from St. Catharines.

Like every other decent bear, Teddy makes all these travels "to see what he can see."

Vander Stelt named John Calvin award winner

Jim De Young

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — Dordt College president Carl Zylstra recently announced that Dordt professor John Vander Stelt, a native of Brantford, Ont., is the winner of the college's 1997 John Calvin Award.

The annual award, funded by Eve and the late Hugh Meeter of Grand Rapids, Mich., is given "in recognition of commitment to teaching from a Calvinistic perspective and developing and transmitting reformational insight for a discipline."

Godly walk

Alumni from 1996, 1992 and 1987, and faculty, were asked to nominate professors for consideration for the award. An independent three-member panel reviewed the nominations and made the final decision.

Vander Stelt has been an instructor of theology and philosophy at Dordt College since 1968. He holds a BA from Calvin College, and a BD from the Free University of Amsterdam. He also received a ThD from the Free University of Amsterdam.

In nominating Vander Stelt for the award, a 1991 graduate wrote: "...What I remember most is how he taught and how he walked with God — with passion, with humbleness, with grace. He inspired me to be one of God's agents for reform and restoration in a broken world."

Another alumnus wrote, "His energy and enthusiasm ... is a prime example to all of how to live out one's Christianity."

Dr. James Koldenhoven, dean of the humanities division, says, "John Vander Stelt came to Dordt and helped set the direction and tone for the college. He contributed greatly to the college's global vision of what it meant to be a Reformed, Christian college, and he carried this idea into the classroom."

News Digest

South African Sally Ann repents

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (EP) — Sins of omission weigh as heavily as acts committed, many say — and earlier this month, the Salvation Army in South Africa agreed with that sentiment. By remaining silent on that country's past policy of apartheid, the organization acknowledged it had sinned. The admission was made by the Salvation Army's territorial commander for southern African, during an appearance before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, according to a Reuters report. The goal is to investigate the past in an effort to heal racial divisions that still plague South Africa.

Not a ringing success

FRANKFURT, Germany (EP) — A bell weighing nearly two tons dropped 16 feet onto a concrete floor and smashed to pieces while being rung in one of Germany's most famous churches. The 167-year-old bell belongs to Frankfurt's Saint Paul's church, which was the site of Germany's first democratic parliament in 1848 and is now used for civic occasions. No one was hurt in the incident.

Most cancer patients don't question God

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (EP) — A study of 45 cancer patients found that a majority reported that their illness had been a faith-building experience, while only one said it had caused a loss of faith. More than half of the patients studied at the John L. Doyne Hospital in Milwaukee said they had never asked God, "Why me?"

Vincent D. Moschella, a primary researcher of the study published in the Journal of Religion and Health, said that lack of questioning was the most surprising finding of the study. "They just assumed God has a reason for their suffering," said Moschella. "The answer to the questions 'Why me, God' and 'Why do bad things happen to good people' appears to lie in the Old Testament proposition that mere mortals cannot understand God's working and must defer that understanding with pure faith."